JEANNE CAMPBELL REESMAN

JACK LONDON'S RACIAL LIVES

A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY

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A CRITICAL BIOGRAPHY

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To my son
John Alexander Reesman
My Man on Trail

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CHRONOLOGY

1876	January 12: JL is born in San Francisco and is named John Griffith Chaney.
September 7	Flora Wellman marries John London, and the child is renamed John Griffith London.
1878	London family moves to Oakland.
1881	Family moves to a farm in Alameda.
1891	After graduating from the eighth grade at Cole Grammar School, JL purchases the *Razzle-Dazzle* and becomes an oyster pirate.
1893	Serves as an able-bodied seaman aboard the *Sophia Sutherland*, a sealing schooner. First work is published: "Story of a Typhoon off the Coast of Japan" (*San Francisco Morning Call*).
1894	Joins Kelly's Army in April; in May begins tramping on his own. Is arrested in Buffalo, N.Y., for vagrancy.
1895	Attends Oakland High School; publishes short stories and articles in the *High School Aegis*. Falls in love with Mabel Applegarth.
1896	Joins the Socialist Labor Party in April. Leaves high school. Is admitted to the University of California.
1897	Leaves university after one semester. Takes a job in the Belmont Academy laundry. Sails aboard the SS *Umatilla* for Port Townsend, Wash., then aboard the *City of Topeka* for Juneau, Alaska, to join the Klondike Gold Rush. Winters on Split-Up Island, Yukon Territory.

1898	Suffering from scurvy, leaves the Klondike, arriving in Oakland late July. Starts an intensive regimen to become a professional writer.
1899	December: meets Anna Strunsky. Publishes twenty-four pieces (essays, jokes, poems, and stories), including "To the Man on Trail" (*Overland Monthly*) and "An Odyssey of the North" (*Atlantic Monthly*, Jan. 1900).
1900	Marries Bessie Mae Maddern April 7. Book published: *The Son of the Wolf* (Houghton Mifflin).
1901	Daughter Joan is born January 15. First journalism assignment for Hearst. Book published: *The God of His Fathers* (McClure, Phillips).
1902	Summers in East End of London, writing *The People of the Abyss*. Daughter Bess (Becky) is born October 20. Books published: *A Daughter of the Snows* (Lippincott); *Children of the Frost* (Macmillan); *The Cruise of the Dazzler* (Century).
1903	Falls in love with Charmian Kittredge. Buys the sloop *Spray*. Books published: *The Kempton-Wace Letters*, with Anna Strunsky (Macmillan); *The Call of the Wild* (Macmillan); *The People of the Abyss* (Macmillan).
1904	January–June: in Korea for Hearst, covering the Russo-Japanese War. June 28: Bessie files suit for divorce. Books published: *The Faith of Men* (Macmillan); *The Sea-Wolf* (Macmillan).
1905	Spends summer at Wake-Robin Lodge in Glen Ellen, Sonoma County. Purchases the 129-acre Hill Ranch, the beginning of his Beauty Ranch. Begins socialist lecture tour October 18. November 18: divorce from Bessie final. November 19: marries Charmian Kittredge (CKL). Books published: *War of the Classes* (Macmillan); *The Game* (Macmillan); *Tales of Fish Patrol* (Macmillan).
1906	Resumes lecture tour January 19, only to cancel because of illness and return to Glen Ellen by mid-February. Begins building the *Snark*. Reports the Great San Francisco Earthquake (April 18) for *Collier's*. Books published: *Moon-*

Face and Other Stories (Macmillan); *White Fang* (Macmillan); *Scorn of Women* (Macmillan).

1907 April 23: the *Snark* sails from Oakland for Hawai'i. May–October 7: *Snark* undergoes extensive repairs while JL and CKL visit Hawaiian Islands. They sail to the Marquesas Islands and then Tahiti. Books published: *Before Adam* (Macmillan); *Love of Life and Other Stories* (Macmillan); *The Road* (Macmillan).

1908 January 13–February 14: round trip from Papeete to Oakland aboard the *Mariposa*. Resumes *Snark* voyage, ending in Australia, where JL is hospitalized. Abandons *Snark* voyage. Purchases the La Motte Ranch. Book published: *The Iron Heel* (Macmillan).

1909 Three-month return trip to Glen Ellen. Book published: *Martin Eden* (Macmillan).

1910 Daughter Joy is born June 19; she dies June 21. JL reports Johnson-Jeffries world championship fight in Reno, Nevada. Books published: *Lost Face* (Macmillan); *Revolution and Other Essays* (Macmillan); *Burning Daylight* (Macmillan); *Theft: A Play in Four Acts* (Macmillan).

1911 Various travels with CKL to Los Angeles, aboard the *Roamer*, to Oregon, and to New York. They move from Wake-Robin Lodge to new home on Kohler Ranch (Ranch House). Books published: *When God Laughs and other Stories* (Macmillan); *Adventure* (Macmillan); *The Cruise of the Snark* (Macmillan); *South Sea Tales* (Macmillan).

1912 Signs book contract with the Century Company. JL and CKL sail on *Dirigo* around Cape Horn. From Glen Ellen JL signs five-year contract with *Cosmopolitan* for fiction. CKL miscarries August 12. Books published: *The House of Pride and Other Tales of Hawaii* (Macmillan); *A Son of the Sun* (Doubleday, Page); *Smoke Bellew* (Century).

1913 In Los Angeles to discuss movie contract. Resumes publishing with Macmillan. Wolf House is destroyed by fire August 22. October 5: premier of *The Sea-Wolf* film. Books published: *The Night-Born* (Century); *The Abysmal Brute* (Century); *John Barleycorn* (Century).

1914	April 18: with CKL leaves Oakland for Vera Cruz, Mexico, to report the U.S. occupation for *Collier's*. Returns to Glen Ellen after acute dysentery episode. Books published: *The Strength of the Strong* (Macmillan); *The Mutiny of the Elsinore* (Macmillan).
1915	Suffers attack of acute rheumatism. Five-month stay in Hawai'i. In December JL and CKL sail on SS *Great Northern* to Hawai'i. Books published: *The Scarlet Plague* (Macmillan); *The Star Rover* (Macmillan).
1916	JL and CKL leave Hawai'i in July to return to California. JL is stricken with acute rheumatism and, later, slight attack of ptomaine poisoning and stomach disorder; complains about inability to sleep. November 22: JL dies at home. Books published: *The Acorn-Planter: A California Forest Play* (Macmillan); *The Little Lady of the Big House* (Macmillan); *The Turtles of Tasman* (Macmillan).
posthumously	Books published: *The Human Drift* (Macmillan, 1917); *Jerry of the Islands* (Macmillan, 1917); *Michael, Brother of Jerry* (Macmillan, 1917); *The Red One* (Macmillan, 1917); *On the Makaloa Mat* (Macmillan, 1917); *Hearts of Three* (Macmillan, 1920); *Dutch Courage and Other Stories* (Macmillan, 1922); *The Assassination Bureau* (completed by Robert L. Fish; McGraw-Hill, 1963).

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To all the readers of Jack London's works, in the United States and around the world, I offer this book as a testament to his artistry and continuing relevance, to a writer who has something to say to all of us, no matter where we call home.

INTRODUCTION

Jack London's works reveal contradictions that characterized his life and art. London (1876–1916), who remains one of the most widely read of American writers, expresses the social, intellectual, and artistic turbulence of the turn of the twentieth century through his competing sympathies with socialism, Darwinism, social Darwinism, and Nietzschean individualism; his startling combinations of urban settings and characters with the pastoral or exotic; and his dual identity as a "literary" writer of the emerging naturalist school and a mass-market phenomenon. Yet none of the author's "contradictions" is more important to understanding his work than his attitudes about race—and how they contributed to his understanding of himself as an author.

Race is part of nearly everything important in London's writings and continues to shape, both positively and negatively, his popular and critical reception. It is a constant subject from an early pair of tales set in Japan, "Sakaicho, Hona Asi, and Hakadaki" (1895) and "O Haru" (1897), to his last story, "The Water Baby" (1916), set in Hawai'i. The Klondike tales are peopled with domineering white men and resistant Indians; the semiautobiographical *Martin Eden* (1909) addresses class differences in terms of racial passing; *The Valley of the Moon* (1913) tracks competing racial groups that settle California; newspaper dispatches from Korea during the Russo-Japanese War and coverage of the Jack Johnson world heavyweight prizefights invoke and challenge popular stereotypes; and late South Seas and Hawaiian fictions critique Western colonialism, attempting to reenvision the Pacific for U.S. audiences using Polynesian mythologies instead of colonial myths of Western dominance. London is among the first U.S. Pacific Rim writers, as his vision of race largely takes place on the vast stage of Oceania's seas, islands, coasts, mountains, gold fields, plantations, farms, and cities, wherever its diverse groups struggled for survival.

Ever present in his works, race has posed difficulties in London scholarship and in teaching. It has increasingly engaged critics, yet it is often misunderstood. The first thing everyone notes about London's racial attitudes is that they were complicated. London was capable of uttering abhorrent crudities in support of white superiority, while a majority of his short stories are rich in imaginative insight into the lives of racial Others. He paired stories highlighting ambiguities about race as U.S. and European powers built empires around the Pacific. His condescending portraits of Pacific Northwest Indians appeared alongside his valorizations of their culture and character and satiric portrayals of white intruders. If he spoke of his admiration for "Anglo Saxons" and used racial stereotypes, especially in his nonfiction and novels, London's greatest appeal to readers around the world was and is his exposure of injustices committed in the name of class or racial superiority and heroic resistance against them. Indeed, London distinguished himself from other popular writers of his day—including fellow naturalists Stephen Crane, Frank Norris, and Theodore Dreiser—by bringing complex, three-dimensional nonwhite characters to the pages of mass-market magazines and books. In stories such as "Mauki," "The Chinago," and "The House of Pride" he unambiguously demonstrates the moral bankruptcy of white dominance while giving voice to competing cultural subjectivities. In "Goliah," "The Unparalleled Invasion," and "The Inevitable White Man" he attacks racist, capitalist, and imperialist values by assailing the ostensible heroes of these stories. Many of his best tales tell of the failures of different races to communicate with one another. In his short fiction we get London's best self—the imaginative artist at work—with his focus on characters who are fully realized human beings.

Yet in some of his nonfiction, in particular his letters and essays, and also in many of the novels, he touts the "scientific racialism" typical of his day, especially when he wants to appear as a public intellectual, as though he must tell his white audiences what he has learned from "scientific" racialist experts, exactly what they want to hear, affirming their social and nationalistic prejudices in order to enhance his public status. The most startling exception to this pattern in newsprint is his coverage of the Jack Johnson world heavyweight boxing matches of 1908 and 1910, when London—himself a worldwide celebrity—begins the series by disparaging Johnson for his race and writing admiringly of his white opponents, but, as the fight stories unfold, in both 1908 and 1910, he abandons the racist rhetoric of other newspaper correspondents and identifies with Johnson, whom he seems to see as a fellow underdog and

fellow performer. That he had to be convinced once again in 1910 of Johnson's superiority highlights the intensity of the general prejudice against black fighters and London's own shifting allegiances. Still, for a number of readers and critics, the naked racism that emerges in some of his works is enough to dismiss him entirely. In the century since his death, race has been and remains the most difficult and misunderstood issue in London studies.

London's works have experienced a resurgence of critical interest in the last fifty years, due in part to publications such as *The Letters of Jack London* (1989) and *Complete Stories* (1993), both edited by Earle Labor, Robert C. Leitz III, and I. Milo Shepard. Critics and biographers have gained recent access to certain archival sources, and numerous critical books and essays have appeared. Research on London's family has provided startling insights into many of London's most characteristic attitudes, particularly those on race, and how these ideas structure his position as author.

Finding his mother, Flora (Wellman) London, at times cold toward him, London turned for maternal care to his stepsister, Eliza London, and to an African American neighbor, Virginia Prentiss, who had been his wet nurse. London lived with the Prentiss family for long stretches until the age of three, then for shorter periods until he left home at age fifteen. He was very attached to Prentiss, commenting in interviews throughout his life on his gratitude for her unconditional love. In general a fraught theme in London's work, parentage often lies at the core of his racial conflicts. London had two fathers, as it were. His probable biological father, William H. Chaney, abandoned Flora when she became pregnant. London thought of his stepfather, John London, as his father until he was twenty-one years old. But more critically he had two mothers, one white and one black. These complications created an intense and lifelong drama of attachment and separation in his personality that shaped him politically, racially, and artistically. The personal drama of attachment and separation plays itself out endlessly in his career in terms of race, wherein Anglo-Saxon ancestry might take the emotional place of the parent or furnish an institution to rebel against.

He wrote his friend and collaborator Anna Strunsky Walling that "I have lived twenty-five years of repression. . . . There are Poseurs. I am the most successful of them all."[1] As a child London developed what one might call a "psychology of want," as he continually sought new means of satisfying confused childhood identity needs. This could manifest itself as an allegiance to a "tribe" such as "Anglo Saxons" in lieu of other sources for identity. London's

nonwhite heroes with whom he could identify might have emerged from this need, and so might have his tragic character Martin Eden, whose racialized quest for self-worth through class and status ends in suicide. Overall London's psychology of want resulted in his ongoing search for a true "house" of personal identity that could be a home, personally and socially, and later also artistically.[2]

Though they engage complex questions of personal identity, London's writings also reverberate with the ferocious racial discourse of the day. His psychological, social, political, and artistic conflicts can be seen as analogues to broader cultural conflicts. As Dale Ross has pointed out,

> The age in which London lived and wrote was the age of Darwinism applied to society, of pragmatism and instrumentalism, of Freud, of Veblen, of Henry Adams, of Marx, Jung, Pavlov, Nietzsche. It is not surprising, therefore, that novelists like London, Norris, and Dreiser display in their work a kind of eclecticism, seeming sometimes to be behaviorists, at others determinists, and at still other times almost neo-romanticists. Thus when London is condemned for espousing conflicting and contradictory ideas and causes, his judges are, unknowingly perhaps, charging him with no greater error than being the representative of the world in which he lived.[3]

Failure to understand London's philosophical conflicts lies at the heart of much misunderstanding of his life and work. As intriguing and inspiring as is London's life of physical adventure, intellectual intensity, and personal fame that made him a cultural icon for generations of readers, his biography—not to mention his work—has been frequently corrupted through exaggeration and misinformation, and by attempts to reduce him to one or another of his selves, personal, philosophical, or artistic. Understanding his racial conflicts has been particularly difficult.

Born in San Francisco only eleven years after the end of the Civil War, London grew up in a California in which white working men, particularly after the Panic of 1893, attacked and lynched Asian immigrants, who they perceived as taking their jobs. Intellectuals at the best universities taught "race science" or "racialism," which posited that the white race was superior to all others. London's childhood reading included the romantic white-boy-genius adventure tales of Ouida (Marie Louise de la Ramée), John Townsend Trowbridge, Paul du Chaillu, and Washington Irving. From such tales London imbibed the

cultural inheritance of "race" alongside personal and familial constructions of racial identity, finding affirmation of his identity as *at least* "Anglo Saxon." As Joseph C. Sciambra notes, London's own boys' tales, *The Cruise of the Dazzler* (1902), *Jerry of the Islands* (1917), and *Michael Brother of Jerry* (1917), are outlandish tales "spattered with racialism" and race domination as conditions of the boys' battles for manhood.[4] Such racialism was a popular motif in adventure literature for adults as well from best-selling contemporary authors such as Rudyard Kipling, Edgar Rice Burroughs, and H. G. Wells.

Having read Captain James Cook's *Voyages* and other travel narratives, London turned to more scientific and philosophical works, reading Charles Darwin, Herbert Spencer, Thomas Henry Huxley, John Fiske, Ernst Haeckel, and Stanford professor David Starr Jordan. He read James Hewitt's *The Ruling Races of Prehistoric Times* (1894) and Meredith Townsend's popular *Asia and Europe* (1901), which warned of miscegenation. The Anglo-Saxon, Townsend insisted, must assert his "moral" right of racial domination or else there will be a future full of race wars among the "unfit" races. Such writers spoke of social Darwinism, white superiority, eugenics, and preserving favored races through natural selection. The U.S. imperialism of the day, which reached into Hawai'i, the South Pacific, the Philippines, Cuba, and Mexico, was at odds with the nativist-inspired anticolonialism espoused by many socialist and Progressive political leaders, contributing to the chaotic cultural milieu in which London developed as a thinker and writer on race. In light of his reading, it is surprising that he could become a writer who portrayed "alien" races sensitively at all.

London's reading in what was then known as "race science" tended to assert itself to the detriment of his writing, as Joseph C. Sciambra has persuasively argued.[5] Depending upon which self-construction of London's is predominant at a given time, his reading, even though it might contradict his lived experience, could reassert itself unexpectedly, as in his 1914 Mexican War correspondence, which bears all the marks of racialist theory, nationalism, and imperialism; his reading of Alfred Schultz's *Race or Mongrel* (1914) was in part to blame. Also, as we will find, London's attitudes about race and its role in his identity fluctuate according to his physical and emotional health. He blamed the Solomon Islands for the struggles he had with dangerous tropical diseases, causing the sudden abandonment in Australia of the *Snark* trip, as he later seemed to blame Mexico for the dysentery that sent him home from the

Mexican Revolution. Paradoxically, he tended to find "scientific" explanations for his own "racial" failures, while having nonwhite protagonists overcome racial obstacles.

The contradictory philosophical pattern of London's individualism versus socialism, though commented upon now by generations of critics, has not been contextualized within the psychology of want that drove him to keep seeking new identities, including "racial" ones. London's sense of identity, his politics, and his writing were profoundly complicated by the mixed racial messages of his childhood and then as an adult by the contacts he made with cultures and peoples around the world, most dramatically on the *Snark* voyage. London's writing follows a pattern of both taking an external, analytical view and imagining himself to be a member of an "alien" community in order to describe it from the inside out. A result of his lifelong curiosity about far-flung peoples and places, his class consciousness, and his self-definition as an author and adventurer, this pattern would reveal itself in London's short stories in his identification with nonwhite underdog characters even as he identified with their white masters. As his daughter and biographer Joan London reminds us, "The dominant theme of all his writings was struggle—the struggle of an individual to survive in a hostile environment or to be successful against great odds."[6]

Outraged by powerlessness and terrified of insignificance, London sought intellectual justification in overcoming the life of the "work beast" that he once seemed destined to lead. Racial identity was and is a key factor in class anxiety for economically oppressed and socially irrelevant white people like him. This urgent personal feature of whiteness for London's development, in sharp contrast to his communal leanings, emerges with startling clarity at certain moments, as when he served as a war correspondent in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904. Stymied by Japanese army officers who blocked his efforts to reach the front lines, he responded in letters and dispatches with anti-Asian invective. Reading them, one observes London as a writer constructing himself against race. Yet years later his personal knowledge of Hawai'i's peoples would cause that point of view to shift dramatically. Speaking at Pan-Pacific League meetings, he urged the cooperation of nations rather than rampant nationalism. When asked by a Japanese newspaper editor how Japan and the United States could give their children a desire for friendship between the two nations, he said first by stopping "the stupid newspaper from fomenting race prejudice"; second, by educating their children "so that they will be too

intelligently tolerant to respond to any call to race prejudice"; and finally, "by realizing, in industry and government, socialism . . . the Brotherhood of Man" (*Letters*, 1219). He also urged Japanese to learn English and Americans to learn Japanese. In these latter examples we witness London's imagination unhampered by racialist theories and instead inviting the possible voices of racial Others themselves.

Scholars who have tackled London's contradictory ideas on individualism and socialism note that London was a socialist nearly all of his life, despite the inconsistency it posed to his racial theories. Oakland socialist comrades rebuked him for those theories, but, as Joan London relates, when Edmond Peluso, one of the members of the Oakland party branch, voiced such criticism, "he drew from London the bilious retort: 'What the devil! I am first of all a white man and then and only then a socialist!'"[7] She tries to explain how a socialist could harbor such racial prejudices:

> Essentially and intellectually, Jack believed in the solidarity of the entire international working class against its common enemy, capitalism. Visualizing the revolutionary struggle, he saw workers of all races as comrades and brothers. But in a specific situation when for instance, the hated "little brown man" was involved, the abstraction vanished and the prejudice returned, tempered, and sometimes camouflaged entirely by subtle rationalization. Jack never admitted the contradiction; nevertheless his writing, both artistically and ideologically, was marred by this chauvinism.[8]

Joan's concerns have been shared by generations of readers. However, while she is correct in pointing out the problem, she gets the pattern backward. It is in the "specific situation" that London is least racist; like socialism, race for him had its personal and its abstract formations, and he is better in the particulars than in the theories, as *The People of the Abyss* (1903) is better than his sociological speeches, or "Koolau the Leper" is better than his theorized racial renderings in novels such as *Adventure* (1911). When he is at his artistic best, race is brilliantly interrogated; at his worst—that is, crankiest, sickest, or intellectually laziest—racism cheapened and ruined his efforts.

Despite the contradictions his work displays about race, London himself was straightforwardly racialized by his celebrity-hood into an Anglo-Saxon he-man in newspapers, magazines, and films. This symbol of the white male "zone-conqueror," as Kipling named this figure, however, was at odds with the actual heroes of his stories, very few of whom would fit this stereotype. Whatever his

racial views, he was praised at home and abroad in mainstream, middle-class magazines as the ideal individualist American white man, while left-wing newspapers portrayed him as a hero of world socialism and brotherhood. Today London is still mostly known in the United States for individualistic, romantic tales such as *The Call of the Wild* (1903), while elsewhere, especially in Europe and Asia, he has long been read and revered as a radical socialist. He remains among the most popular U.S. writers abroad. At home, Paul Lauter has persuasively argued that London's excision from U.S. literature anthologies during the Cold War years, and hence the damage to his reputation in the States, may be attributed largely to his leftist politics. Yet today the radicalisms that made him undesirable then now draw new critical attention:

> [A]s the conditions of class disparity and, I suspect, conflicts of the early 21st century come in critical ways to resemble those of the early 20th century, London comes to resonate increasingly with us. Not, I think, because he had resolved in his own gut or writing the issues of class conflict and imperialism, but precisely for the opposite reason. These issues remain tense and emotionally resonant in his work because they are unresolved, ever in play, ever subject to acts that are not pretty, often not hopeful, sometimes enraged but always frighteningly human.[9]

Lauter points out that U.S. textbooks resist accepting London as a radical socialist and are more likely to portray him as a radical individualist of "American values." I believe that general misunderstandings of London's locations in U.S. social and political discourse are due in large part not only to conflicts between individualism and socialism but to underlying conflicts of race.

Among the many valuable contributions to the study of London and race there is consensus on a few points.[10] First, London's racial ideas are complex and contradictory. Second, despite his ideas on evolution he tends to focus not upon the species or the group but on exceptional individuals of any "race" and their responses to environment. And third, although London worried over what he called "mixed breeds," he paradoxically portrays people of mixed racial ancestry as among his most interesting heroes, thereby simultaneously acknowledging and questioning stereotypes.

Who can adapt to an environment in which usual responses are stripped away? London's heroes often have a dormant regressive self, a mark of profound connection with their environment—an identity he names "the abysmal brute" that helps them adapt and survive, because as "brutes" they are aware

of their situation. In his Strenuous Age works, David Brion Davis observes, London "hammers away at the stultifying effects of society, preferring always the romantic adventurer to the soft-muscled cultivated man of parts." Still London's heroes are not "bullies [n]or overbearing egotists" but "extensions of aspects of the American character. All self-made men, they possess the basic distrust of society that characterized the folk heroes of an earlier America. And each of them is used to mirror the tension within the American popular mind: the yearning for escape from the restraints of a self-imposed commitment to progress and order, which means membership in society."[11] London early on adopted Herbert Spencer's "survival of the fittest," but his attitudes evolved toward Darwinian views based on Thomas H. Huxley's emphasis on ethics and community. In the readings of London's racial selves that follow, London's "brute" within comes to resemble not so much a fair-skinned Viking ancestor as a dark ancestor. The protagonist Felipe Rivera in "The Mexican" wins the fight against all odds both because of his inner determination to right the wrongs to his family and village and because of his inherited "Indian" blood. As Paulo Vera observes, Rivera is the "Revolution incarnate."[12] The reversal of London's personal phobias about miscegenation in his fiction indicates an internal "mixed" self.

Jack London's Racial Lives traces the various houses, or locations, of London's imaginaries of race in his own life and in his writings as social and artistic topographies of identity and race, based on his psychology of want as search for identity. It examines selected works generally following their order of composition and the chronology of London's geographical locations, tracing how the metaphor of identity as a "home" or "house" can stand for the self, mind, body, culture, nation, class, place, and race. Each chapter analyzes London's works and offers contributions to current discussions of race theory on the construction of authorial identities *as* certain types of locations or narrative spaces. The book reveals crucial elements of London's life and work, illuminates his historical and literary milieu, and helps explain his longevity on the bookshelf.

In some houses sought out by London's artistic persona he is at home; in others, he must either find a way to understand imaginatively the new environment or to take flight. This narrative pattern of being either at home or seeking a home reflects not only his conflicts concerning his origins and identity but, more important, his artistic goals. As an adult he opened his home to just about anyone with a story to tell or a point to debate, as playing host was a favorite activity. As a child he moved constantly as his parents'

fortunes waxed and waned, and he experienced other displacements, such as his mother's renting out his bed to boarders and sending him to work at the age of seven. From early on he was on the move, always seeking a home but never staying for long. Biographers have wondered why a man so devoted to his ranch in Sonoma would spend so little time on it, instead traveling to distant lands. What drove his restless wandering and seeking among so many peoples and places? What compelled him to want to understand the people and their communities? How do their "houses" either admit or repel him? Is his bodily "house" one of health and vigor, to welcome Others as an equal to them, or one of disease and degeneration, which he would blame on contamination by the Other? And most important, what narrative strategies did London develop to write about successive race encounters within the thematic pattern of a search for a home?

In each chapter I use tropes of racial identity making to expose how London's narrative structures work. These tropes—narratives of passing, the slave narrative, the tragic mulatto, double-consciousness, cross-identification, miscegenation—have been identified in African American and, more broadly, in ethnic and postcolonialist scholarship, to describe class, ethnic, racial, or national spaces and borders, liminality, diasporas, competing constructions of "ethnic" identity, and interracial and interethnic encounters. Yet these tropes of race and identity have generally been applied only to writers of color, and certainly not to a white writer sometimes identified as racist. London was so conflicted about his own racial identity, however, that his writings on race more clearly resemble the work of minority writers of color than the work of his white mainstream contemporaries. Perhaps because of this he has had an impact upon such later authors as Oscar Micheaux, Richard Wright, and Américo Paredes. César Chávez was a London fan, and so was Che Guevara. Any writer who can appeal at once to Theodore Roosevelt and to these readers presents important conflicts in his racial positions.

I did not begin writing *Jack London's Racial Lives* thinking that I would appropriate models from African American studies to read London; rather, their uncanny appropriateness became clearer to me as I reread his works over the years. I began to see the ways in which these critical constructions continued to suggest themselves, and I realized that London was using techniques—consciously or unconsciously—that appear in the work of his African American contemporaries Charles Chesnutt, James Weldon Johnson, and Pauline Hopkins. Though Toni Morrison does not treat London in *Playing in the Dark:*

Whiteness and the Literary Imagination, she certainly could have. His tropes of whiteness, from the White Silence of the Northland to the White Logic of alcoholism, speak of a sense of whiteness as deadly, while his creation of so many nonwhite heroes with whom he identifies speaks of a need for "blackness." In one important respect, however, London does not fit Morrison's category of white writer. Unlike most white writers, who disguise race or blackness in their works, London is overtly obsessed with race. By raising the topic of race, London is tied closely to Morrison's argument about why reading white writers for race matters. What often emerges as "race" in London frequently pertains, of course, also to class. His interrogations of American identity in terms of race and class have never been more relevant than they are today.

Tracing race in London's works can be frustrating and difficult, but in the course of our effort we learn much about London as a writer, about the world he lived in at the turn of the last century, and about today's world, in which London can now be read in nearly a hundred languages. Most writers in his day either parroted the prevailing white racism of the time or (rarely) were consistent in refuting it. The telling inconsistencies—the reversals and mirrorings of self and other, of whiteness and blackness, of home and abroad—make London, if contradictory, a writer who continues to be read by millions and one whose works over the past half-century have increasingly been deemed worthy of critical analysis.

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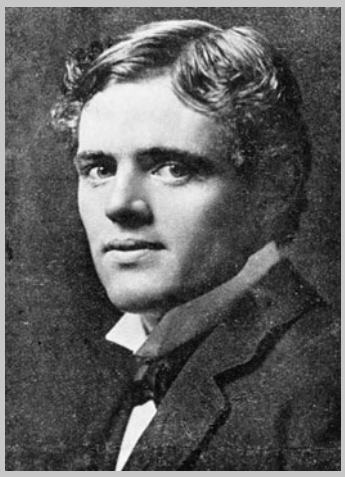

ONE

Jack London and Race

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It has often been remarked that Jack London was a man who lived different lives as author, adventurer, sailor, sportsman, socialist crusader, rancher, war correspondent, and more. Understanding the role of a feature of his work as significant as his preoccupation with race first requires understanding the multiple contexts in which his thinking and writing on race developed alongside his increasing self-identification as a writer. Racial factors in his early life, in his historical, social, and cultural milieus, and in his reading provide a matrix for critical analysis of his writings. In any given work London's treatment of race is tied to his identity as an artist determined to escape the strictures of class- and race-bound identity in turn-of-the-century America balanced against his uncertainty about which identity to embrace.

As in the work of many white writers, nonwhite "others" in London's fiction symbolize various parts of the white observer's projected identity. Beyond these usual projections of whiteness London does something else, especially in his short fiction. Not only does he consistently explore nonwhite characters' points of view and voices; in contrast to his white contemporaries he identifies directly with these characters instead of merely projecting traits. They are usually the heroes and often narrate their own stories. While London saw large groups as having distinct racial differences and engaged in competition, he admired strong members of a given race. If he celebrated the "Anglo-Saxon's" heroic spirit in the Klondike fiction, he exposed the racist hypocrisy underlying the Euro-American takeover of Northwest and Pacific peoples. He created many negative WASP characters, such as Percival Ford of "The House of Pride." (As Stoddard Martin observes, "to no minority was London ever so hostile as to the lean, pale, tight-lipped exemplars of the Eastern WASP ruling-class. These men are detested by their fellow-capitalists even, the Californians Harnish and Forrest."[1]) But there are a few bronze gods, like David

Grief of *A Son of the Sun* (1912), who would seem to represent the best that "white" heredity, nationality, and capitalism could dream of, including passing as brown.

Even more than Grief, his creator had the freedom to move back and forth between competing points of view around the world. Imagining his characters, London displays an unusually unfettered point of view on culture and race. In the Yukon and in the Pacific, where he set the majority of his short fiction, he was neither missionary nor trader nor colonialist; he represented no government or capitalist concern; he was able to come and go as he pleased and observe what he wanted to observe, and, most importantly, imagine what he wished to imagine, including challenging racial categories.[2] There are especially memorable nonwhite heroes in stories such as "An Odyssey of the North," "The League of the Old Men," "Chun Ah Chun," "Koolau the Leper," and "Mauki." These Other heroes and their voices make London's handling of race in his writings truly distinctive. London's identifications with so many different cultures is almost certainly a reason he is one of the most widely translated and read American authors in the world.

In many of his tales cultures come into conflict along racial lines, but contrary to Herbert Spencer's social Darwinism, in London's work the white race does not necessarily conquer the Other or exhibit superior attributes. Sometimes, as in "The Devils of Fuatino" or "The Feathers of the Sun," racial differences give way to brotherhood between whites and Others, but not before white characters are punished for their transgressions, reflecting a different, more Huxleyan Darwinism. In many of London's stories, however, no one wins. In most of his Pacific stories whites are portrayed as diseased, evil, foolish, or alcoholic wastrels, while islanders are heroic but doomed resisters of white colonialism. In many cases mutual failure to understand each other—as in "The Chinago"—is the fatal problem: linguistic failure to adapt to an environment that includes others, to understand their ethics and values through language. Unlike much adventure writing of his day, in London's works a visit to an exotic locale focuses not upon "native" practices as exotic but upon their normalcy, if upset by the oppression of their "civilizers"—a reversal of popular stereotypes about indigenous peoples. In *Roughing It* Twain makes fun of the missionaries in Hawai'i but seems repelled by the Hawaiians themselves, especially the women, with an almost Victorian sexual fussiness. London's point of view is not only sympathetic to indigenous people but often demonstrates an attempt to see things through their eyes. Where Twain satirizes, London, like

Melville's narrator Tommo in *Typee* (1846), identifies. For London, "culture" is a relative matter and cruelty is condemned whenever and wherever he sees it, taking aim as a socialist at oppressive political and economic institutions no matter who is behind them.

Appropriate for someone strongly influenced by Darwin, London continued to adapt and evolve as a writer. Often, stories and ideas are ironically paired. London paired stories to switch point of view, as in *The Call of the Wild* and *White Fang* or in *Adventure* (1911) and "The Red One" (1916), in order to reconsider an idea or value from an opposed point of view, what Lawrence I. Berkove calls his "second thoughts."[3] The deeper psychology at play is particularly obvious in London's last few stories of 1916, when his revisionism especially on race was influenced by his reading of Carl Jung and his growing awareness of his own relativity and mortality. In these last tales he brilliantly rethinks earlier ideas about humanity, developing them into a global sense of human community.

The genre in which London is writing makes a difference in his handling of points of view. Whereas in a short story like "The House of Pride" London draws sympathy for a nonwhite hero and attacks racism, in other genres he echoes racialist ideas of the day. There seems to be a sort of moral and ethical continuum on race from the antiracist short fiction through the novels to essays and then to newspaper interviews, and, finally, letters, which contain some of his worst racial invectives. One contrasts, for example, his letters from Korea to Charmian Kittredge, his soon-to-be second wife, with his sensitive portraits of ordinary people in his dispatches and his photojournalism while in Korea.

Finally, London's diverse reading is always a (conflicted) factor. A racialist book he was reading when writing fiction could infiltrate his own work with artistically disastrous results. However, in most of his stories his reading of racialist and social Darwinist sources is overshadowed by his own sense of what he called "human documents," his observations and interactions with diverse peoples around the globe, his preference for Huxleyan Darwinism, and by his reliance upon traditional literature such as the Bible and Homer.

The organizing metaphor for *Jack London's Racial Lives* is the many "houses" of London's authorial and racial identities. It is inspired by the title "The House of Pride," London's first Hawaiian story, one that signaled a major change in his attitudes toward race. By locating London's career and personal racial identifications in the worlds he constructs in his writing, readers can

establish meaningful spaces from which to explore London and race, how his construction of authorial houses of fiction—his many points of view—was influenced by personal racial concerns against the contemporary "science" of racialism, and, most important, how it contributed to the artistic decisions he makes. Responding to a restless need for new "houses" in which his imagination could be located, London dwelled in and wrote about more locales than any other U.S. writer of his day. While Henry James's version of the artistic imagination was a single, stable house of fiction with many windows from which different artists would see things from their own vantage points, London's houses are made of many materials and are found all over the globe, as he explored and experienced other cultures and tried on other identities.[4] He created houses of fiction in which he could imagine being at home in new and even oppositional physical, spiritual, or artistic locales. He imagined points of view from racially "superior," racially "equal," and racially "inferior" characters, as well as narrators whose orientations are ambiguous. And London's house of fiction is not, in contrast to James's, strictly a metaphor of the creative mind. It is also very physical, located not only within an artistic imaginary but within his body and within particular spaces. When he tries to imagine the experiences of Others and not dwell on his own limitations, he is challenged to look at his own bodily and spiritual "houses" critically alongside those of others.

When London was especially miserable in an imaginative and physical "house," as he was in the final days of the *Snark* voyage, he tended to write attacks on racial Others, whom he blamed for his physical ailments. Hence what often turned London against a particular house was becoming ill within it. As we will see, many of his triumphs were cut short by illness—the scurvy that sent him home from the Klondike, the tropical illnesses of the *Snark* trip, the dysentery that ended his Mexican Revolution correspondence, and finally the chronic kidney disease that killed him at age forty. The integrity of his own body was nearly as influential a factor in his assessments of his many houses around the world as was his sense of access to his artistic imagination. The place where it all came together—body, mind, imagination, politics—was Hawai'i, which he first visited in 1893 aboard the *Sophia Sutherland*, a sealing ship, then later for adventure, and finally to soothe his ills. In the summer of 1907, having visited in quick succession a sugar plantation on Oahu where he observed and photographed immigrant field laborers, and then a leper colony on Moloka'i, London wrote about the Hawai'i behind the postcard-perfect paradise, especially those Hawaiians who had been radically "othered." His

article "The Lepers of Molokai" and his stories "The House of Pride" and "Koolau the Leper" infuriated many of his *haole kama'āina* friends interested in promoting Hawaiian tourism and opposed to revealing racial and economic injustice or mentioning leprosy.[5] They had certainly not expected sensitive portrayals of Asian workers and the lepers from a writer identified with Anglo-Saxon vitality.

It would be convenient if London had been a racist before the 1907–08 Pacific voyage and an antiracist ever afterward. But he wrote attacks on racism early in his career and later could revert to racial stereotypes up until his last stories of 1916. He usually could not get past the darker skin and way of life in the Solomon Islands or "Melanesia," and in 1914 he assigned crude stereotypes to Mexicans while reporting on the revolution.[6] He returned to a more ironic and expansive view of community in the stories he wrote just before his death in 1916. Reviewing his career, one is repeatedly struck by the enormous influence Hawai'i in particular had on London's writings during the *Snark* voyage and again later when he lived in the islands for much of 1915–16. Both times, Hawai'i seemed to exert significant antiracist influence on London and his evolving sense of self and community, not to mention the artistic inspiration that no other locale furnished.

To do his most believable, meaningful, and humane work, London had to be comfortable in his own skin—but not too comfortable. That is, in his cultural, personal, and racial "houses" of identity he was most artistically productive when he relied on his own original observations of human beings and their environments, focusing on his interactions within diverse communities rather than theories he had read. This was possible more than anywhere else in Hawai'i. The contrast is easy to see when we compare London's narrators with an armchair observer like Tom Buchanan in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* (1922), who parrots racist writers like Madison Grant in *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916), speaking of peoples and places he has never and will never encounter. His smug, untested convictions are quite different from London's characters' anxious relocations of personal and racial identities among nonwhite Others. Unlike Fitzgerald in *Gatsby*, and even more unlike Hemingway in *To Have and Have Not* (1944), London is *worried* about race, and against Hemingway's constant racial slurs he almost sounds like a late Victorian reformer. London rarely uses racial epithets, and when he does they are not casual. As an artist he does better with a restless observer like Nick Carraway than a complacent Buchanan or the isolated would-be baron, Gatsby.

Johnny, then "Jack," London lived in twenty-three different houses before his twentieth birthday in 1896. His mother, Flora (Wellman) London, was rarely content for long in any one spot or at any one enterprise, which is understandable given the difficult times and her husband's infirmities. London complained throughout his life about her unpredictable temper and equally unpredictable coldness toward him. Yet Flora, like her son, was willing to try just about anything to make a dollar: sewing, séances, boarding houses, farming, running general stores. In 1895 it was her suggestion that London send the *San Francisco Call* his first story, "A Typhoon Off the Coast of Japan."[7] But most of her fruitless schemes for financial success took the family helter-skelter from town to farm and back again, to San Francisco, Oakland, Alameda, San Mateo, and Livermore. In his foreword to the *Jack London Homes Album*, Earle Labor notes that despite London's gregariousness and ability to adapt creatively to his surroundings, he was "radically speaking, a 'displaced person,' uprooted and continually on the move from his earliest years. . . . While he was as much at home in this world as any human being has ever been, his career might justly be interpreted as a lifelong quest to find the ideal home he had missed as a child."[8] London's 1906 essay "The House Beautiful" projects a dream home: "My first idea about a house is that it should be built to live in," where "utility and beauty should be one." Human ethics dictate "yearnings for honesty. . . . [I]n no way can these yearnings be more thoroughly satisfied than by the honesty of the house in which [one] lives."[9]

In their introduction to the *Jack London Homes Album*, Homer L. Haughey and Connie Kale Johnson describe London as "a man who needed to have a home" but who nevertheless "spent almost his whole life of forty years on the move." Yet wherever he lived, whether in the old Oakland days or at the Beauty Ranch in Glen Ellen in Sonoma County, California, London "opened his home to friends and gave them whatever he could."[10] He confessed to Anna Strunsky that "I have the fatal faculty of making friends. . . . And they are constantly turning up. My home is the Mecca of every returned Klondiker, sailor, or soldier of fortune I ever met. Some day I shall build an establishment, invite them all, and turn them loose upon each other. Such a mingling of castes and creeds and characters could not be duplicated" (*Letters*, 144–45).[11] On the ranch he had his dream home, Wolf House built, where he hoped to fulfill his "House Beautiful" dream and entertain artist and intellectual friends. Sadly, nearly completed, it burned in August 1913. Nevertheless, one imagines that had it survived its owner would have seldom left his travels for long to be at

home there. As soon as he could, he escaped from his first homes to the sea and to the road, a pattern he would maintain throughout his life as a roamer among many lands, while, like an Ishmael or Huck Finn, restless in any home he happened to find.

A letter he wrote to Charmian on June 18, 1903, during their courtship describes his continuing need to adopt multiple selves through his imagined characters. It also points to a critical psychological split from childhood, a desire to belong at odds with a desire to remain apart. As we will see, what I term his "psychology of want," his opposing wants, is of great importance in understanding London and race and London as an artist.

> I wonder if I can ever make you understand. You see, from the objective facts of my life I have always been frankness personified. That I tramped or begged or festered in jail or slum meant nothing by the telling. But over the lips of my inner self I had long since put a seal—a seal indeed rarely broken, in moments when one caught fleeting glimpses of the hermit who lived inside. How can I begin to explain? Perhaps this way. My child life was uncongenial. There was nothing responsive around me. I learned reticence, an inner reticence. I went into the world early, and I adventured among many different classes. A newcomer in any class, I naturally was reticent concerning my real self, which such a class could not understand, while I was superficially loquacious in order to make my entry into such a class popular and successful. And so it went, from class to class, from clique to clique. No intimacies, a continuous hardening, a superficial loquacity so clever, and an inner reticence so secret, that the one was taken for the real, the other never dreamed of. Ask people who know me today, what I am. A rough, savage fellow, they will say, who likes prizefights and brutalities, who has a clever turn of pen, a charlatan's smattering of art, the inevitable deficiencies of the untrained, unrefined, self-made man which he strives with a fair measure of success to hide beneath an attitude of roughness and unconventionality. Do I endeavor to unconvince them? It's so much easier to leave their convictions alone. (*Letters*, 366)[12]

RACE LIFE AT HOME

The home Jack London was born in on January 12, 1876, located in a run-down part of San Francisco, was a far cry from a "house beautiful." Nor did it usually hold anything like the easy good humor of friends he later sought to have at his

dinner table. George Wharton James quotes London on his feelings about the many moves the family made and his yearnings for companionship:

> "We had horses and a farm wagon, and onto that we piled all of our household belongings, all hands climbing up to the top of the load, and with the cow tied behind, we moved 'bag and baggage' to the coast in San Mateo County, six miles beyond Colma. It was a treeless, bleak and foggy region. . . . The only other people of the neighborhood were Italians and Irish. Ours was the only 'American' family. . . . I was a solitary and lonely child. Yet I was a social youngster, and always got along well with other children. . . . I lived a dual life. My outward life was that of the everyday poor man's son in the public school: rough and tumble, happy go lucky, jostled by a score, a hundred, rough elements. Within myself I was reflective, contemplative, apart from the kinetic forces around me."[13]

In this interview London also recalls that he took "'a violent prejudice—nay, it was almost a hatred—to country life at this time, that later I had to overcome. All this tended to drive me into myself.'"[14] London was by no means the only child to have to move often and to grow up poor, and many homes were less congenial than his. But something in London's makeup was critically aware of a split between outer and inner lives having to do with his sense of being "at home," whether with himself, with family, friends, or neighbors, versus a sense of being cut off from others, and this became the underlying, conflicted force of his life as a writer. In becoming a writer, he insisted, "I had no mentor but myself" (*Letters*, 149).

An ancestry such as London's would have given anyone much to contemplate when it came to personal identity, including a place in the family, the family's place in the community and its history, and, as he later learned, one's very legitimacy. As a youth he desired membership in a larger mythical family or tribe, whether as an Italian prodigy like the poor hero who becomes a musician in Ouida's *Signa*—his favorite childhood book, which he picked up while joining in the festivities of Italian families on neighboring farms—or a world-marauding Anglo-Saxon from boys' books of adventures fighting pirates and finding treasure in the tropics. The London home harbored family legends of pioneer glory. His mother, born in 1843 into a wealthy Massillon, Ohio, family proud of its Welsh ancestry and pioneer heritage, moved to San Francisco at the age of thirty-one to join its bohemians, perhaps as a result of her father's loss of fortune in the Panic of 1873. Yet she was proud of her bourgeois upbringing, a pride that, as Joan London puts it, "even half a century

later glowed warmly in the memory of an old woman who had not known a like pride and security again until it was too late to matter."[15]

In June 1874 Flora moved in with an itinerant astrologer, William H. Chaney, as his common-law wife. "Professor" Chaney, as he called himself, born in Maine in 1821, had lived around the country practicing astrology and had been married several times. Chaney's specialty was predicting proper astrological mating by consulting the natal charts of prospective parents to forecast the optimal birth month and day for their child, who would then become a potentially superior being. As Joan London records, Chaney believed that "intelligent, astrologically guided parents can bring their infant to a marvelous maturity as scientifically as certain of a result as a chemist achieves a successful experiment in a laboratory."[16] But when in June 1875 Flora told Chaney that she was pregnant, instead of consulting their star charts he told her to have an abortion. When Flora refused, he abandoned her, and she responded with what was probably a faked suicide attempt, covered in lurid detail by the newspapers. Like Chaney, Flora was at that time known in the Bay Area, in her case for her séances.

After a difficult labor Flora bore a boy, whom she named John Griffith Chaney. It seemed that she was not able to produce milk, and her doctor intervened to place the baby with Mrs. Virginia Prentiss, an African American neighbor of the Londons whose own baby had been stillborn the same day. The baby was taken to the Prentiss home to be wet-nursed. Even after he was weaned around age three, London still lived for long periods with the Prentisses—Virginia, her husband Alonzo Prentiss, and their children Will and Priscilla—until he left for the waterfront at age fifteen.

Virginia Prentiss was a former slave who escaped Tennessee during the Civil War and joined the burgeoning African American community of Oakland. Though she was known to be proud of her dark skin and her race, she chose as her husband a light-skinned man who passed for white in his construction jobs. Alonzo Prentiss probably introduced Flora to John London, who worked on one of his crews. John was a Civil War veteran and widower from Iowa who had placed two of his children in foster care and taken the remaining three, Charles, Ida, and Eliza, with him to California, where Charles died. John asked Flora to make some shirts for him. In September 1876, when her baby was nine months old, they married. London was fond of John, who was affectionate where Flora was reserved, but the effects of his injuries in the war meant he could not provide for his family as he wished. According to Joan London, when

London was a student at Berkeley he learned that John was not his father. He was incredulous, but Flora confirmed it: "The shock caused by this knowledge cannot be overestimated. Jack brooded over it for months, and until the end of his life the scar was sensitive." He also learned of Chaney's abandonment of Flora and her suicide attempt, adding to his horror. He wrote to Chaney twice, but Chaney denied paternity, using the excuse of sterility.[17]

In a letter recently come to light London sketches out a biography of himself to be used for marketing purposes, and the focus is on his heredity and fitness as an "Anglo Saxon" adapted to the American frontier. At the request of Maitland LeRoy Osborne of Boston's *National Magazine*, who planned to review London's *The Son of the Wolf* (1900), in a letter of March 24, 1900, London wrote that he was "a Californian by birth as well as residence," and while he acquired a grammar school education while living on ranches until his tenth year when the family moved to Oakland, "rough life always called to me, my whole ancestry was nomadic (its destiny apparently to multiply and spread all over the earth), so at fifteen I, too, struck out into the world." He emphasizes that he did not "run away" ("my people knew the strain in my blood, so I went with consent"), and tells how he went among "the scum marine population of San Francisco Bay, where I got down to the naked facts of life," of his time as a sailor on the *Sophia Sutherland*, and of his tramping days and the Klondike. Upon his return, "Never having been unwise enough to learn a trade, I . . . worked at all sorts of hard labor." He apologizes for his beginner's work but notes that he has not "yet been so financially situated that I could try anything long" or "ambitious." He ends by saying he wrote *The Son of the Wolf* for cash.[18] The whole letter positions this new writer as a white man of the working class whose blood somehow contains the golden ancestry of world conquerors. He is who he is, this letter implies, by virtue of his blood and hard work, and in neither case by the privilege of being born into the bourgeois class. This last point fits with his socialism, but it also expresses his identity as an exceptionalistic westerner, unfettered by the categories dictated for writers by eastern critics.[19]

London clearly needed to launch an identity away from home. In describing his home life, he often mentions the harshness of his mother in contrast to loving-kindness from Prentiss, whom he referred to as Jennie. He once told Charmian: "I do not remember ever receiving a caress from my mother when I was young." Charmian recalls, "with Jennie (and I now revert, in the spirit of homeliness, to first names for all), Jack found love and acceptance."[20] His

younger daughter Becky recalled that "Daddy always said that the only love and affection he knew as a child came from Aunt Jennie. He never remembered his mother kissing him. Well, I don't either; Grandma was not demonstrative. Aunt Jennie not only loved Daddy she helped him in many ways, loaned him money, backed him in everything he did. She was a wonderful woman and a friend to everyone. Not only to Grandma but to Daddy and me—a loving friend."[21] As a child London resented Flora's spiritualism and saw her and it as frauds. Many mediums in Flora's circles used Indian spirits (whose "race" they thought made them "naturally" in touch with the spirit world). Flora's was "Plume," an Indian chief who "usually announced his arrival with a terrifying whoop, and his otherwise sober discourse was frequently punctuated with unexpected yells and gibberish," as Joan London recalls. London hated seeing Flora in her "trances" as Plume; he thought this was "claptrap fit only for weak-minded people." Acutely "aware of the first approach of one of what he called his mother's 'fits,' he would hastily leave the house until they had run their course," Joan notes.[22]

As the Londons moved from Oakland, Alameda, San Mateo, and San Francisco to Livermore, the Prentisses moved with them, thereby always ensuring London a loving second home. As Clarice Stasz has noted, Prentiss first affectionately nicknamed him Jack because he jumped in her lap like a jumping jack. He was called Johnny at the London home.[23] He later inscribed many books thanking Prentiss.[24] According to descendants of family and neighbors of the Prentisses in Oakland, compiled in an account of London's relationship with Prentiss by Eugene P. Lasartemay and Mary Rudge, he reportedly attended the First African Methodist Episcopal Church with the Prentisses and was walked to Cole Grammar School by Priscilla, taunted by white children as a "white pickanniny." When at fifteen he yearned for his first boat, he borrowed three hundred dollars from Prentiss to buy the sloop *Razzle-Dazzle* and paid her back from his proceeds as an oyster pirate in San Francisco Bay. Some of his earliest memories were of Prentiss's telling him Bible stories and stories of her experiences in slavery.[25] As Stasz observes, "At the Prentiss home Johnny found a family less plagued by financial worries, and more united by the parents' well-defined and expressed Christian values. Whereas Flora was unconventional in her spiritual beliefs, Jennie was a faithful member of her church and was devoted to reading the Bible. Whereas John could not seem to hold to a job, Alonzo was steadily employed. Whereas the Londons were always grasping for a perch they could not seize for long, the Prentiss family

had found its niche in the middle class."[26] In 1884 London was deeply upset when sixteen-year-old Eliza London, an even closer source of maternal love, suddenly married a boarder in the London home, the much-older Captain James Shepard, perhaps to escape Flora. He had depended upon Eliza to love him. But she and Shepard ended up settling not too far away, and with the Prentisses also near by, he usually had access to these two important maternal figures.[27]

As an adult London bought Prentiss a house and contributed to her church. In 1891, after her children had both died, they remained close; when her only grandchild and then Alonzo died in 1903, London brought her to his home to help raise his daughters. As Becky recalled, "She was always independent . . . [and] took care of herself for years doing domestic work. [Then] [s]he was always proud that Daddy had left her a monthly income. It made her more independent, if that was possible."[28] If today it sounds incongruous to describe a black woman domestic as "independent" because of a lifelong monthly stipend, at the time a regular salary and pension could not be expected from white employers of domestics, though Prentiss was hardly just a "domestic." In addition to caring for her own children and her church work, Prentiss cared for London, Flora, Bessie, Charmian, Joan, Becky, and other London relations. Perhaps she was the only safe ground for all of London's family to meet upon. In 1906 Prentiss joined the widowed Flora to live on Twenty-seventh Street in Oakland, where she stayed even after London's death in 1916.[29] In her remaining years Prentiss moved several times on her own, working as a nurse, and died in the sanitarium in Napa in 1922 at the age of ninety-one. She remained close to Charmian and other family members until her death. Charmian signed for her remains and arranged her funeral.

Virginia Prentiss was an important influence on London not only as a surrogate mother but also as a woman of color who was proud of her race and rejected white superiority.[30] Once sold on the block, with plenty of stories to tell, she was obviously one of London's first models as a storyteller and survivor of oppression. At the end of the Civil War, the thirty-three-old Virginia and her mistress, starving, fled the Parker plantation in Tennessee for St. Louis. Becky recalled Prentiss's escape narratives and her father's memory of them:

> [S]he spent all the afternoon telling us stories. These were the fascinating adventures she had experienced on the long trip from the burned plantation to St. Louis, the dangers, and sometimes the funny events; the terrifying days and

> nights hidden in the woods to escape the soldiers; the sad sights of houses and barns burning and people standing around weeping; the times of near starvation. She had one dream over and over at that time—she would be about to eat a big baked sweet potato dripping with butter when she would wake up.[31]

But Prentiss's escape did not end happily. While her mistress found shelter with relatives, Jennie was forced to look out for herself. Washing clothes and taking care of children, she worked in St. Louis, returning to Nashville for a job as a housekeeper for the Alonzo Prentiss family.[32] She later married Alonzo and bore him two children.

Born in Tiffin, Ohio, Alonzo Prentiss was a skilled carpenter whose story also influenced London's ideas on race, particularly as he passed as white. Alonzo had married a white woman, but both the Union Army in which he was serving and his wife repudiated him when his "true" biracial identity was uncovered. Discharged from the army in 1862, he decided to start a new life as a black man and moved with Jennie to Chicago and then San Francisco. Fears of the "Yellow Peril" raged and trades and professions were officially closed to blacks and Asians, but Alonzo was accepted as white and soon found work. He had to lead two lives, keeping his black wife and children separate from his white working acquaintances who, he assumed, would not approve of the "intermarriage."[33] For her part, Prentiss became an important part of the Oakland black community.

Recalling the London home, London spoke of being starved; later Flora and Eliza puzzled over this, for they remembered food to have been plentiful.[34] But perhaps London was thinking of emotional starvation. When they lived in the countryside, Flora's racist ideas forbade her son from playing with the Italian, Greek, and Portuguese children of neighboring farms. Yet Flora's "pioneer" prejudice against competing groups didn't prevent her from adjusting her racial rules to suit her needs, as demonstrated by her use of Prentiss as a babysitter. Despite Flora, London wandered the farms to visit Italian families, where he found books to borrow and good humor. He recalled an Italian wedding he attended, wondering at the difference in this couple's bold and public feelings and those of his own parents. As he recounts in *John Barleycorn* (1913), he learned to "read" people by observing the contrast between the passionate, wine-drinking Italians and the severe atmosphere at home. "Whatever gloomy prejudice Flora was impressing upon him," observe Lasartemay and Rudge, he seems to have tried to reject, "but [Flora's] teaching seeped [in], nonetheless."

As they observe, "Forever after he would have a dual being: one open to people, eager to love all and to explore the world, loyal to any human, drinking with them, and searching romantic love, and one judgmental, despising himself . . . failing in his fantasies of family and romantic love, and never knowing why. His was a mind early divided."[35]

By 1877 Oakland was the second-largest city in California, an integrated society of middle-class tradespeople of numerous ethnic groups. The multiethnic waterfront stimulated London to imagine worlds of diverse peoples and places. On the *Razzle-Dazzle* he sailed the tricky waters of the bay, learning by trial and error. He may have received tutelage under Captain William Shorey, a friend of Alonzo's and the master of the whaling ship *Emma F. Herriman*, the only vessel on the West Coast with an African American captain. But on the docks London seems to have had to think of himself as a member of an ethnic "tribe," and that was Anglo-Saxon, which fostered an inner sense of superiority to help rationalize a lowly place as what he called a "work-beast." As he had learned at home, he needed a certain set of selves to survive; if the eventual self he chose was that of a writer, his sense of authorial as well as personal identity would never be a stable one. Flora, despite her ambitious intentions for Johnny, helped create psychological and racial divisions in her son's sense of identity. As an antidote to her racism, the different ideas of racial tolerance he absorbed from the Prentisses and elsewhere seem to have remained an inner but powerful secret. Sometimes that awareness was a source of shame and confusion for him, but at other times, especially later in life, it was a point for him to steer by to uphold family life as the politics of shared community and imaginative openness to Others.

What happens, one wonders, to a writer famous for endorsing Anglo-Saxon superiority but who has a black mother? Such a division lies deep in London's identity. When parents create cognitive dissonance for their child—that is, when what they are telling the child does not match their behavior or his or her inner compass for reality—it can contribute to a personality based on denial and wants that can never be satisfied. What did London make of Flora's racist diatribes when she left her son at a black woman's home to be largely raised by her? What about the knowledge that his mother lied to him about his legitimacy? One result would be a lifelong obsession with identity involving denial; another would be a divided emotional life, never "at home" in one self. As Joseph C. Sciambra puts it, the "mixed messages, from the two most influential women from his childhood" not only sparked London's early

interest in Spencer and racial theory, but in Prentiss's case also furnished an inspiration for his sense of the "Brotherhood of Man" as well as his startling ability to imagine alternate racial selves.[36] Biographers have erred in placing so much importance on the identity of London's father or fathers—one even suggested an exhumation of Chaney in order to investigate his genetic material, now covered over by a parking lot—when they should have been looking for Virginia Prentiss all along.

In leaving home as a teenager, London thought he had found in oyster pirating the perfect escape from the shore and its gang fights, his uncongenial mother, the constant relocations, and even the respectability Prentiss insisted upon. Like Robert Louis Stevenson and Mark Twain before him, London drank at Alameda's Croll's Tavern and Oakland's Heinold's Saloon, with their racially mixed boxing crowds, sailors, roustabouts, freightmen, fishermen, and waterfront gangs. Other escapes were soon to be to the sealing life on the North Pacific aboard the *Sophia Sutherland* and riding the rails east as a hobo. But London soon found pirating and hoboing to be less thrilling than he had hoped and less likely to furnish a lasting identity. The most significant month of his hoboing experience was July 1894, when he was imprisoned in New York's Erie County Penitentiary as a vagrant. Having deserted the army of unemployed men he journeyed with for a march on Washington ("Coxey's Army"), he wanted to see the sun rise at Niagara Falls, and so he camped out the night before but was arrested at daybreak. As Franklin Walker remarks, in the penitentiary London, always "tremendously sensitive to experience, saw things which for the rest of his life he insisted were not only unprintable but unthinkable. Being denied a jury trial or even an opportunity to plead his case shocked his faith in American institutions, while having his hair and small moustache clipped, donning striped prison garb, and walking in the chain gang hurt his ego." As Walker notes, he saw "fellow turn his hand against fellow," a "man so beaten by the guards that his spirit was broken," and several murders. London discovered that most of his companions intended to return to crime when they were released. Walker regards the effect of London's prison experience as something that "cannot be overestimated."[37]

But there was not only the personal threat to life and limb in this experience: as London wrote in *The Road* (1907), "Our hall was a common stews, filled with the ruck and the filth, the scum and dregs, of society—hereditary inefficients, degenerates, wrecks, lunatics, addled intelligences, epileptics, monsters, weaklings, in short, a very nightmare of humanity."[38] His reference

to "hereditary inefficients" points to his fear of losing his identity as a white man and his hopes for rising in society. As Walker puts it, prison provided London a powerful example of how "society was badly put together, and that, in meeting his personal problems so as to avoid becoming a victim to social disorder, he resolved in the future to use his brains and 'open the books.' Only in that way could he escape the plight of the casual laborer, 'the work beast.'"[39]

RACE AND NATIONAL DESTINY

In her biography Joan London deplores the tendency among his critics "to judge Jack London's work without appreciating the environmental forces which shaped his life."[40] The San Francisco of London's day was the center of a vast region of western development, where first, she notes, the "lure of gold and silver in the mountains and tales of fertile farming land" drew prospectors and farmers to California. Then workers who had lost their jobs back east came out, as did shopkeepers, businessmen, financiers, promoters, soldiers of fortune, social rebels, and capitalist bosses. From eastern Asia came immigrant workers. London's life and work were imbued with the uneasy, but creative diversity of the West:

> Successive waves of emigration had deposited a heterogeneous population from all over the world on the sand hills, where it scrambled for homes and jobs and quickly became part of the city's life. Out of the maelstrom of widely differing manners, customs and ideas, and far from the steadying influences of the older East, was emerging a society that was flexible yet independent, scorned hidebound beliefs and principles, and welcomed anything that was new.[41]

But things were not easy for most new arrivals. The 1870s saw a crisis over the use of silver "cheap money," urged by western farmers squeezed by high railroad tariffs, and the gold standard, which was favored by eastern bankers. The post–Civil War slump in prices caused many farmers to acquire multiple mortgages; foreign debt rose; money was scarce; land but not income was taxed. All the while corruption flourished.[42] As Joan puts it,

> Romantic tradition to the contrary, the settlement of the West was not voluntary, but dictated inexorably by the needs and ambitions of European and American capitalism. Railroads were built thrust into new lands, fences were built and virgin soil was plowed because American agriculture had not only to feed the

> growing millions of workers in Western European cities, but to provide her own bankers and industrialists with commodities which would help to pay the interest on foreign loans and buy what was needful to transform the country into a capitalistic one.[43]

"Settlement" held no certainties. Successive economic panics occurred; for example from 1890 to 1893 the bullion value of the dollar fell from eighty-one to sixty cents. Banks closed, railroads went into receivership, businesses failed. The gap between wealthy and middle- and working-class families widened. Labor conflicts dramatically increased in frequency.[44]

Late nineteenth-century America experienced massive immigration demanded by industrial production, changing the country's population from one of pioneers and early immigrants. Many workers now came from the Mediterranean and Baltic countries rather than England, Ireland, and Germany, joined by Italians, Slavs from Austria-Hungary, and Russian Jews; on the West Coast the workers were from China and Japan. Yet unlike previous immigrants who assimilated, newer groups settled in big cities where the nature of their work and their alien speech segregated them. As Joan London puts it, "Wage slaves were wanted now, not Americans. And so the melting pot, which had served the country well in the past, gradually ceased to function."[45] Late nineteenth-century naturalist authors thus grew up in an America "ripe with incongruities," as Eric Carl Link notes: scientific, political, and historical ideologies challenged traditional religious views, while "unparalleled expansion" in industry, agriculture, and immigrant labor created social pressures exploitive of the democratic republic that justified them.[46]

Donald Pizer has meaningfully contrasted the two dominant ideas of national destiny of London's day inspired by immigration. Herbert Baxter Adams of Johns Hopkins University held that "American democracy had been racially transmitted through Anglo-Saxon immigration, first from northern Germany to England and then from England to America." Adams, holding a University of Heidelberg doctorate, believed that the tribal councils of primitive Germans were followed by the English folkmoot and by the New England town meeting and saw "the drive toward democratic participation" as an "instinctive expression of a racial heritage." This "germ theory" of American life was championed by such figures as Theodore Roosevelt, who emphasized "the romance of the 'long march,' of the constant pushing westward of the Anglo-Saxon race and the planting, at each stage of its conquest of new worlds,

of a seed which would ultimately flower in American democratic society."[47] Roosevelt's rhetoric was that of conquest:

> The warlike borderers who thronged across the Alleghanies, the restless and reckless hunters, the hard, dogged, frontier farmers, by dint of grim tenacity, overcame and displaced Indians, French, and Spaniards alike, exactly as, fourteen hundred years before, Saxon and Angle had overcome and displaced the Cymric and Gaelic Celts. . . . In obedience to instincts working half blindly within their breasts, spurred ever onwards by the fierce desires of their eager hearts, they made in the wilderness homes for their children, and by so doing wrought out the destinies of a continental nation.[48]

There were immigrants and then there were immigrants, however. John O'Sullivan (the *Democratic Review* editor who coined the term "Manifest Destiny") described in California "The irresistible army of Anglo-Saxon emigration . . . armed with the plough and the rifle, and marking its trail with schools and colleges, courts and representative halls, mills and meeting houses." He warned that the "very virtues of the Anglo-Saxon race made their political union with the degraded Mexican-Spanish impossible." In Congress a southern senator worried that the nation would be "compelled to receive not merely the white citizens of California and New Mexico, but the peon, negroes, and Indians of all sorts, the wild tribe of Comanches, the bug-and-lizard-eating 'Diggers,' and other half-monkey savages in those countries as equal citizens of the United States."[49] From the *Catholic Citizen* to the Yiddish *Aben Blatt* to the Polish *Dziennik Chicagoski* came warnings about the racial dangers of U.S. imperialism in the Philippines and elsewhere. The *Catholic Citizen*, with its large settled immigrant readership, supported the new restrictions: "The inhabitants of the Philippine Islands include . . . Kanakas and Malays who are half-civilized and in rebellion; canny Chinese and shrewd Japanese and—in the interior—thousands of naked negritos, wild and untamed as the red aborigines." How, it asked, "can a system of self-government be extended to such a people?"[50]

In the 1880s Josiah Strong had predicted that the world was about "to enter upon a new stage of its history—the final competition of the races for which the Anglo-Saxon is being schooled. If I do not read amiss, this powerful race will move down upon Mexico, down upon Central and South America, out upon the islands of the sea, over upon Africa and beyond."[51] London marked this passage: "Only those races which have produced machinery seem capable

of using it with the best results. It is the most advanced races which are its masters," a theme to which he would several times return, as in the Mexican Revolution correspondence.[52] At the time London was reading Strong, Hawai'i, Cuba, the Philippines, Puerto Rico, and Samoa had succeeded Mexico as U.S. territories or protectorates, all taken by force.

To feel artistically at home as a white man at first meant that London acknowledged the "racial" drive inherited from primitive Anglo-Saxon "tribes" in competition with other tribes, a stance his hero takes in "The Son of the Wolf," but he then had to question such a status. Throughout his career London envisioned white superheroes who could cross all kinds of lines, racial, social, and sexual. Richard Gid Powers sees "When the World Was Young" (1910), in which a wealthy white businessman turns into a naked savage at night, as evidence of an Anglo-Saxon blond god fantasy, but also a revolt against such stereotypes. Such caveman tales "catered to racial insecurity as well as to race pride." In the world of monopolies, global markets, inherited wealth, and closed frontiers, "where was the hero of evolution, the Anglo-Saxon survivor, to see current proof of his fitness to survive his anxious and losing struggles with the layoff, the strike and the giant corporation?" His superiority could only be demonstrated into a "world of his own devising, a clean, beautiful, primitive world in which, he convinced himself, the fit, be they man or beast, could and would survive."[53]

Yet as Pizer points out, Americans also subscribed to the view of American destiny that opposed the germ theory, and that was Frederick Jackson Turner's notion of the frontier and not heredity as the agent of national identity: American democracy was "not the last flowering of a pure seed developed elsewhere," but instead took place on "the soil which took the mixed seeds which fell upon it and transformed them into something new and distinctive, the American race."[54] Turner's thesis would have appealed to London in that as a westerner he shared in what Pizer calls "a widespread discontent among western intellectuals with eastern domination of American cultural life" and the importance it placed on such things as the New England town meeting and the racial purity of early settlers. As Turner famously restated his thesis in the *Atlantic Monthly* in September 1896: "The West, at bottom, is a form of society, rather than an area," a region where the application of older institutions meets "the transforming influences of free land," creating an entirely new environment. This "constructive force" in the West continues generation after generation, "a history of the evolution and adaptation of organs in response to

changed environment, a history of the origin of new political species."[55] London seems to have embraced both theories of national identity. Germ theory and frontier theory are both evolutionary in character. Characteristically, London leaned toward heroes who were "hereditarily" predisposed to greatness but who were also able to adapt and be shaped by hard circumstances. This is true whether the hero is a Solomon Islander such as Mauki, or a Viking throwback such as David Grief. Because they have superior minds and skills, they are able to adapt to nearly any "house."

JACK LONDON, ANGLO-SAXON?

In any twenty-first-century usage of the word, London could certainly be termed a racist, but, as this book sets out to show, not a very good (that is, consistent) one. London espoused the ideas of "scientific racialism" popular among intellectuals of his day, but as an artist he saw his depictions of different ethnicities as the prerogative of any dramatic artist: "I have made villains, scoundrels, weaklings, and degenerates of Cockneys, Scotchmen, Englishmen, Americans, Frenchmen, Irishmen, and I don't know what others." And, he adds, "Being a socialist, I subscribe to the brotherhood of Man" (*Letters*, 1024). With rare exceptions, London was not a snob or a racist in his personal life. Indeed, it is hard to imagine him being an outright racist and at the same time electing to spend nearly two years traveling in the South Seas, much of the time eating, living, dwelling with, and making friends with people who were hardly accorded humanity by most Westerners, who thought of South Pacific islanders as wild, apelike cannibals. One of the happiest chapters of *The Cruise of the* Snark concerns the Londons' adoption into the home of these same islanders on Bora-Bora.

Some definitions are needed. The term "racialism" has a precise historical meaning that is often obscured when it is (incorrectly) used as a polite term for a person's taking note of racial differences, as one hears it from those eager to protect a favorite historical or literary figure. But Tzvetan Todorov has memorably argued that in the work of authors we must distinguish "between *racism*, which is a ubiquitous form of behavior, and *racialism*, or theories of race, whose heyday extended from the middle of the eighteenth through the middle of the twentieth centuries." While "racist attitudes have always existed" in human history, "they have not always had the same amount of influence." Ironically, he notes, when societies approach democracy racism becomes

"an increasingly influential social phenomenon." In traditional, hierarchical societies, a common ideology makes physical differences of less importance, as "it is more important to know who are masters and who are slaves than whose skin is light and whose is dark." But in democratic societies, although actual equality does not prevail, "the ideal of equality becomes a commonly shared value." In order to maintain power, those at the top turn to "apparently irrefutable and 'natural' physical differences." In fact, the abolition of slavery led to the rise of racialism in the United States: "we attribute to 'race' what we no longer have the right to attribute to social difference." Todorov also reveals the surprising relationship between the development of the natural sciences and racism: they are coevals. Documenting physical appearance and social behavior is a "typically scientific mode of reasoning, since science consists in the effort to replace chaos with order."[56]

Todorov's distinction between scientific *racialism*—the belief that one's race is superior but not necessarily implying hatred for other races (though of course hatred could be the result)—and *racism* clarifies London's beliefs.[57] The racialism he at times admired was historically limited, and though it certainly influenced him as a "science," it affected his writings unevenly, creating contradictions. For example, even in his essays "The Yellow Peril" (1904) and "If Japan Awakens China" (1909), frequently cited as examples of his prejudice against Asians, London is actually quite nuanced and ironic about supposed Anglo-Saxon superiority. As previously noted, many of the heroes in his short stories are people of color, and even his Anglo-Saxon heroes are sometimes brown, such as Elam Harnish or David Grief. In blatantly racialist novels such as *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore (1914), London's narrator, not protagonist, (at least in part) seems to be satirizing the stupidity of Anglo-American racial beliefs, like Melville in *Benito Cereno* (1856). London did not always treat "race" in the same way; in his best work, largely short stories, race is very much a factor but racialism is absent.

London's favorite version of whiteness, his presumed personal identity as an Anglo-Saxon, was a notion he shared with many whites in America. Upholders of the germ theory believed that whiteness was restricted to persons of "Anglo-Saxon" stock derived from Preconquest Britain, or, what a character in Charles Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901) refers to as "'de Angry-Saxon race—ez dey call deyse'ves nowadays.'"[58] According to this point of view, Germans, Scandinavians, Italians, Celts were not fully "white" in America before the turn of the century. The process of becoming American was

nearly identical to the process of becoming white. From a racialist's point of view, an influx of "undesirable" or "pseudo-white" people started in the 1840s. Anglo-Saxonist exclusivity lasted until the 1920s, when, following the 1924 immigration legislation, the Johnson Act, this particular problem dissolved as whiteness was extended to certain non-English Europeans. After 1920, as Matthew Frye Jacobson has noted, a pattern of "Caucasian" unity "gradually took its place." "Anglo-Saxon," which had crossed over into American vernacular from "scientific" discourse, was no longer the preferred term. At its height, however, it performed different exclusionary functions, says Frye, as it "separated racially 'pure' Americans from 'mongrelized' and 'degenerate' Mexicans on one front; and it divided virtuous, self-governing Anglo-Saxon citizens" from Celts and others, even as it also fueled U.S. imperialism.[59] Today we may find both horror and amusement in contemplating the era's notions of Anglo-Saxons, but the term "Anglo" is far from dead. In the southwestern United States and increasingly throughout the country, both Latinos and non-Latinos use this term routinely to refer to whites in general (without prejudice, unlike "gringo").

Belief in the superiority of the Anglo-Saxon may be linked, as Reginald Horsman notes, not only to the nineteenth century's fascination with the "science" of racial classification but with the "whole surging Romantic interest in uniqueness, in language, and in national and racial origins." Americans had long believed they were a chosen people, "but by the mid-nineteenth century, they also believed they were a chosen people with an impeccable ancestry." With Roosevelt's philosophy of "winning the west," U.S. Anglo-Saxonists "reached new heights of confidence in the last years of the nineteenth century," assuming that "one race was destined to lead and others to serve—one race to flourish, many to die. The world was to be transformed not by the strength of better ideas but by the power of a superior race." This vision is what Roosevelt had in mind when he applauded, as Horsman puts it, "the vigor and prowess shown by our fighting men" and the nation's "lift toward mighty things," scorning the "shortsighted and timid" who opposed wars "for the advance of American civilization at the cost of savagery."[60]

Anglo-Saxonists also promoted Darwinian ideas of adaptation that helped popularize the frontier theory. As the leading philosopher of late nineteenth-century racialism, Herbert Spencer adapted Darwin's notions of natural selection and the "struggle for existence" to apply to racial competition. Eugenicist Benjamin Kidd, in *Social Evolution* (1894), and biometrician Karl Pearson,

in *National Life from the Standpoint of Science* (1900), argued that the evolution of humankind depended on "the struggle for existence" among the world's "competing" races. The fittest race, they claimed, would naturally outcompete its rivals—through war, economic contention, or political conflict—and achieve world dominance. Evidence of such dominion would confirm the supreme evolutionary development of the race on top.[61]

But London departs from these Anglo-Saxon definitions in interesting ways. First, though in the Klondike stories he praises the vigor of the Anglo-Saxon hero, he also has in mind not just the relatively peaceable settler-farmer of Anglo-Saxon villages, but the Viking-Norman warrior who overran the Anglo-Saxons, the chaotic (not nation-building) "blond beast" of Nietzschean fantasies, and an image he eventually gave up. It is a common mistake to read London as a lifelong admirer of Nietzschean Superman heroes, such as the often-cited Wolf Larsen of *The Sea-Wolf* (1904); in this book and nearly all of London's works—including notably his most famous short story "To Build a Fire"—the "lone wolf" hero like Larson perishes. The hero who sticks with his community of trail-mates survives. Second, London did not see the history of the Anglo-Saxons as a unique race adventure but as expressing a universal impulse. In his essay "The Human Drift," London states, "Whether a bankrupt gentleman sailing to colonise Virginia or a lean Cantonese contracting to labour on the sugar plantations of Hawaii, in each case, gentleman and coolie, it is a desperate attempt to get something to eat, to get more to eat than he can get at home."[62] This is less Manifest Destiny than practical reality. He goes on to define this universality by citing examples from European, Mediterranean, and Asian history.

London also violates a major tenet of Anglo-Saxon whiteness by being so self-conscious about his own raced-ness. Like Toni Morrison, Richard Dyer describes the typical position of an author speaking as a white person as "one that white people now almost never acknowledge and this is part of the condition and power of whiteness: white people claim and achieve authority for what they say by not admitting, indeed not realising, that for much of the time they speak only for whiteness." Put another way, "other people are raced, we are just people. . . . [T]here is no more powerful position than being 'just' human. The claim to power is the claim to speak for the commonality of humanity."[63] But London nearly always foregrounds his and his characters' raced-ness to shift his reader's perspective away from assuming merely a white point of view.

As a young man, imbibing what he thought were the most accurate racial

theories of the day from leading intellectuals at top universities, London found his socialist beliefs in the brother- and sisterhood of humankind challenged by his racialist teachers. As an outgrowth of his socialism and his own psychology of race and identity, he began creating fictional selves who resisted such abstractions and represented his powerful sense of individuals oppressed by institutions such as class and race. No matter what the racial temper of his work, London is always interested in the sociology and psychology of race. The conflicts generated between competing points of view lead to the dialogic structures of his strong stories and to the confusions of his weaker ones. Either an outsider tries to understand and temporarily enter a culture he is not a part of, as with London's persona in *The People of the Abyss*, or a cultural insider tries to explain it to the outside world, like Kohokumu in "The Water Baby." London may emphasize the differences and disunities among diverse groups of people, often along racial lines, yet over time his stories increasingly promote an ideal of brother- and sisterhood and an evolving sense of a larger community. Throughout his life London seemed to need something more than "whiteness," so much so that he lived racial lives through the vast array of characters with whom he identifies and voices: Tlingit Indians, East End cockneys, Irish street gang members, Greek fishermen, Chinese oyster pirates, hobos, prisoners, anarchists, mad scientists, the mentally retarded, lepers, cavemen, Hawaiians, Koreans, Japanese, Polynesians, Melanesians, Mexicans, Ecuadorians. His most famous character was a dog.

Naturalism offered London rich possibilities for writing about race because of its focus upon biology, determinism, and Darwinism, and because U.S. readers were so consumed by debates on immigration, nativism, imperialism, the effects of the latest economic panic, and above all the systemic and growing class inequalities of the era. But London handled race rather differently than white male writers of his day, especially the other naturalists. Frank Norris could rhapsodize about a stereotypical "decayed and dying Mexican town" in *The Octopus* (1901) or without apology describe the "old Jew" Zerkow in *McTeague* (1899): "He had the thin, eager cat-like lips of the covetous; eyes that had grown keen as those of a lynx from long searching amidst muck and debris; and claw-like, prehensile fingers—the fingers of a man who accumulates but never disburses. It was impossible to look at Zerkow and not know instantly that greed—inordinate, insatiable greed—was the dominant passion of the man."[64] Neither Dreiser nor Crane (with the exception of Crane's "The Monster" and Dreiser's "Nigger Jeff") seemed seriously interested in

taking on the race question, as London did so frequently, fervently, even obsessively. They certainly did not identify with nonwhite characters. His cross-identification sets London apart from his naturalist contemporaries; it is easy to sympathize with the racially oppressed but quite another thing to be consistent in imagining *being* them or telling a story from their point of view, from within their community, or "house." The difference is partly due to London's lower-class and "mixed" racial background as compared with those of the other naturalists. Other well-born popular writers such as Owen Wister did not feel obligated to think critically about race, as the crude racial stereotypes in *The Virginian* (1902) confirm. And London's interrogations of race stand in sharp contrast to the self-righteous bigotry and gratuitous violence of Thomas Dixon in *The Klansman* (1905) and D. W. Griffith's film version, *Birth of a Nation* (1915).[65] London's psychological, class, and racial struggles through his characters resemble less those of his fellow naturalists than they do those of such writers as Chesnutt, James Weldon Johnson, Pauline Hopkins, Sui Sin Far, and Abraham Cahan.

One reason we read London today is that he was consumed with *questions* about race, character, and identity—and didn't pretend to solve those questions. Through his writings he continued to provoke and push racial issues beyond the accepted limits.[66]

WHAT HE READ

Many and probably most readers of Jack London believe that he was mainly an outdoorsman who took notes, made photographs, came home, and wrote up his adventures. Few realize just how much he absorbed from the more traditional sources for writers. Despite a busy and active life, London spent an enormous amount of time reading. As Sciambra has noted, London regarded the books in his library as a sea captain would regard the charts in his chart room. As London explains,

> It is manifestly impossible for a sea captain to carry in his head the memory of all the reefs, rocks, shoals, harbors, points, lighthouses, beacons and buoys of all the coasts of all the world; and no sea captain ever endeavors to store his head with such a mass of knowledge. What he does is to know his way about in the chart-room, and when he picks up a new coast, he takes out the proper chart and has immediate access to all information about that new coast. So it should

> be with books. Just as the captain must have a well-equipped chart room, so the student and thinker must have a well-equipped library, and must know his way around that library. (*Letters*, 1146–47)

David Mike Hamilton's survey of London's book annotations—which admittedly covers only a small part of his reading, the books now at the Huntington Library—also gives an indication of the amount and range of his reading. In 1899, for example, when he started using his reading as source material, he discussed in letters reading literary figures including Rudyard Kipling, Robert Louis Stevenson, Ambrose Bierce, Paul Bourget, Edwin Markham, John Keats, Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, Thomas Babington McCaulay, Thomas De Quincey, Charles Dickens, Charles Reade, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Harriet Beecher Stowe, but he spent more time with philosophers and scientific writers such as Baruch Spinoza, Israel Zangwill, Thomas Malthus, Jean Jacques Rousseau, Thomas Carlyle, David Starr Jordan, Otto Weisman, Paul Carus, August Weismann, and Henry Drummond. Reading Ernest Renan's *Anti-Christ* and *The Apostle* refocused his attention on the Bible and helped inspire his never-written Christ novel, for which he began making notes the next year. He also read several books on Asia for essays on global economy he intended to write.[67]

Impressionable as he was when it came to philosophy, science, economic theory, or race theory, and even though he might be writing an antiracist story, London would still absorb a particular racialist idea from a book he happened to be reading. Such sources became a "confusing amalgamation of different voices mixed with his own," yet, as Sciambra confesses, "I would much rather read one of London's books than a book by Spencer or Woodruff. Though London often covered the same material in his fiction as the racialists did, he brought flesh and dynamism to such phrases as 'the survival of the fittest' or 'the saturation point of populations.'"[68]

Like many a young man's earliest intellectual positions, London's were not only based on whatever he was reading at the moment but were sometimes as poorly thought-out as they were passionately held, reflecting his youth, ready mind, and autodidacticism. London would marshal what he deemed to be scientific authorities on any subject to try to wear down any opponent with sheer "facts." Like the adolescent totalitarian of many a family dinner table, on race as on other scientifically "provable" grounds, London would spring to defend his ideas long after anyone was really listening, signaling their emotional con-

tent for him. Letters to his early writer-friend Cloudesley Johns give a flavor of this. On June 23, 1899, he lectures Johns on British rule in India, which he sees as cruel and neglectful, but productive in the sense that "the millions who swarm there" now have "education, system, government, justice, such as we know to be the best." Johns had urged a more democratic stance, but London insists:

> If no race has the moral right to survive the destruction of lesser races, where, in the whole animal kingdom are you going to draw the line? . . . The different families of man must yield to law—to LAW, inexorable, blind, unreasoning law, which has no knowledge of good or ill, right or wrong; which has no preference, grants no favors, whether to the atoms in a molecule of water or to Time, Space, matter, motion. (*Letters*, 92)

Reflecting both his knowledge of Darwin's evolutionary theory and his initial misapplication of it, London concludes, "From the family unit, through the tribal dwelling, to the race aggregation, you may trace the rise of an altruism, . . . The line stops there" (*Letters*, 92–93). At this time he believed, echoing Spencer, that the human race would evolve toward a racially restricted utopian socialism based on kin preference. Survival on earth was meant "for the happiness of all certain kindred races. . . . so that they may . . . inherit the earth to the extinction of the lesser, weaker races."[69] On June 12, 1899, after teasing Johns that his Welsh ancestry did not make him any more Anglo-Saxon than would "the Hindoo blood of India or the Iranic of Persia" (temporarily forgetting his own mother's Welsh blood), London outlines his writer's version of world racial history as mainly linguistic, with credit given to Chaucer: "Because, from the many dialects spoken in England subsequent to the Norman Conquest, one dialect happened to be the medium chosen by the more gifted writers of that time, that dialect was elevated finally into the King's English." Their linguistic kinship unifies Anglo-Saxons, an identity-boosting point for a writer to make: "Substitute for Anglo-Saxon, all that portion of the Teutonic branch which speaks English. One is the same as another" (*Letters*, 86–87).[70] One sympathizes with Johns, who, upon reading this last letter, wearily asked that they drop the "race problem" from their future letters.

Undeterred, as a "Distinguished Magazine Writer," London gave a talk on December 3, 1899, titled "The Expansion Policy" at Union Square Hall in San Francisco, arguing that "There should be labor and food for all. We invent. We take advantage of the forces of nature. We enslave the wind and waves. We

put shackles upon the unseen powers." London argues for the logic of a more efficient use of the land as the ethic of possession, these high-sounding words followed by a comparison of slothful and industrious farmers to entire peoples, and a clearer sense of who "We" might be:

> A people possess a land. . . . If they cannot form a stable government, they cannot guarantee law and order, nor, hence, can they develop the land. Shall the land lie idle because the people have been false to the terms of their tacit trust? And shall they reproach the fruitful earth by remaining upon it to the exclusion of those who could develop it? . . . If the original, lazy, mismanaging owner be at all reasonable, he can take service under his more strenuous brother.[71]

On the one hand London argues for a socialist, universalist brotherhood in which there shall be no slaves, but there is still the "right" of the advanced "brother" to take over the land from "inefficients."[72] This glaring philosophical conflict is typical of London's early writing.

Articles on many aspects of race appeared in the journals and magazines London read and first published in: *Atlantic Monthly*, *Cosmopolitan*, the *Overland Monthly*, *Century*, and many others. For example, London filed two different *Atlantic Monthly* articles from 1909 in which Quincy Ewing and Kelly Miller argue completely different perspectives on race. Ewing advocates white vigilance, while Miller dismisses racial differences and argues for education for all, an argument also made by John T. Bramhall in the *Overland Monthly* in 1909 and by Booker T. Washington in *Cosmopolitan* in 1902, also saved by London. London's race files contain essays on "The Negro Problem," eugenics, and immigration, interspersed with Negro dialect songs from plantation days and demeaning drawings of subservient, "happy" slaves. There is Thomas Nelson Page's "The Great American Question: The Special Plea of a Southerner," which avers that "The leopard may change his spots and the Ethiopian his skin; but neither can change that for which the outer marking was used but as a symbol: his nature. . . . [These] negroes only two or three generations removed from the cannibal feasts of Africa, whose leaders [during the Civil War] boasted that they would love to wade in the blood of white men and women." Page asks,

> Are we ready to make of the American people a negroid nation? This is the aspiration of the negro;—not of the old-time negro, perhaps; for he was well brought up; but of the new negro, the "Afro-American." Whatever social equal-

> ity may signify to the white, to the ignorant negro and apparently to many who are not ignorant, it means one thing: the right to stand on the same footing with a white woman as that on which a white man stands with her. It means this and nothing but this.[73]

Predictably Page ends with accounts of black men ravishing white women.[74] Combining pseudoscience and hysterical vitriol was not unusual; many essays with dry titles such as "The Progress from Brute to Man," "Morality and Environment," or "Natural Selection, Social Selection, and Heredity" in London's files contain inflammatory rhetoric just as viciously bigoted.

The worst fear for racialists was miscegenation and the production of what they called "mongrels," a phobia London found hard to relinquish.[75] Although from his earliest stories he drew heroic characters of mixed blood, like Sitka Charley or even Buck himself, and in his last unfinished work, *Cherry*, he has a mixed-blood heroine, he held a strong bias against "half-breeds" or "mongrels," at times alluding to his knowledge of stock-breeding to discuss human heredity.[76] While he felt well-disposed to "pure" bloods of any type, he would still condemn "half-breed" races, most notoriously in his Mexican Revolution correspondence. Racialists thought they were doing their scientific and civic duty by warning of "mongrelization," believing their interventions expressed the highest principles of morality and the human good (hence the term "eugenics," Greek for "well-born"). Their aims and their fears found a home in London, in part due to his own anxieties about his "mixed" heritage.[77]

In 1900 under the leadership of Frederick Irons Bamford, the Ruskin Club was formed in Oakland for the purpose of dinner and debate once a month at the Metropole Hotel. Bamford was a mentor of London's at the public library and a fellow socialist. London joined the club, which counted among its members the prominent socialist Austin Lewis, David Starr Jordan, Jacques Loeb and other professors at the University of California, the poet Edwin Markham, liberal ministers, and a wide variety of other socialists. At the monthly meetings Darwin and Marx were read and analyzed, as were other intellectual figures of the day. Several figures London read and met there exerted lasting influence on him. Indeed, among the most influential sources on race for him were the books such as those he encountered through the Ruskin Club.

Friedrich Nietzsche (1844–1900), whom London did not read intensively until 1904, is often mentioned as a formative racial influence, but as noted above, this has been misunderstood. Nietzsche's "Superman" or Übermensch,

perfect in mind and body, unmatched in strength and intelligence and unhampered by social or religious mores, was, of course, "Teutonic." Even late in life London wrote that "I have been more stimulated by Nietzsche than by any other writer in the world" (*Letters*, 1485). Joan London describes his approach to Nietzsche as emotional and enthusiastic, not scholarly, as evidenced in another letter from 1912: "I . . . am in the opposite intellectual camp from that of Nietzsche. Yet no man in my own camp stirs me as does Nietzsche" (*Letters*, 1072).[78] Identifying with Nietzsche's "long sickness," as London called it (*Letters*, 500), a reference to his own deep depression around this time, London sympathized with the "brilliant and misunderstood German philosopher," as Gary Riedl and Thomas R. Tietze note.[79] London's attraction to Nietzsche can also be seen in the brutish but pure-blooded conqueror character named in London the "abysmal brute." Though he eventually rejected Nietzsche's Superman as a dangerous and doomed figure, his readers were not so sure; he had to write a lot of letters on *The Sea-Wolf* and *Martin Eden* explaining that the individualist hero was in fact a failure.[80] To an admirer of Nietzsche he wrote with sympathy: "I have gone through the various stages which you described yourself as now going through. I once, in the long ago, had a beautiful body and was as proud as the devil of it. I once had the Nietzsche sickness" (*Letters*, 1374). It is important, given London's frequent use of disease as a controlling metaphor, that he eventually characterized Nietzschean values as a sickness linked to his own "long sickness" and the decline of his body. Still, it was his Nietzschean statement "I LIKE" that set him on the *Snark* voyage of adventure.[81]

Early on London met and read David Starr Jordan (1851–1931), the first president of Leland Stanford University, who helped introduce social Darwinism and eugenics to the United States, and who would become London's friend and mentor. They met in Oakland during Jordan's lecture series on evolution, published as *The Days of a Man: Memories of a Naturalist, Teacher and Minor Prophet of Democracy* (1922). In Jordan's earlier *Foot-notes to Evolution* (1898) London encountered the ideas of Francis Galton, a cousin of Darwin's who was inspired by Spencer to outline basic eugenic principles. Galton's and Jordan's ideas figure strongly in *The Kempton-Wace Letters* in Wace's comparison of human mating to stock breeding. London's subject file titled "Prose Excerpts" contains a virtual anthology of quotations from Jordan, such as the following from *The Care and Culture of Men* (1896): "The Anglo-Saxon race, with its strength and virtues, was born of hard times."[82] It is "a lineage untainted by luxury, uncoddled by charity, uncorroded by vice, uncrushed by oppression."

As Jordan sees it, "God said: 'I am tired of kings; I suffer them no more.' And when the kings had slipped from their tottering thrones, as there was no one else to rule, the scepter fell into the hands of common men.[83] In *The Call of the Nation* (1910) Jordan urged eugenics as "the great law on which national permanence depends."[84] He placed the good of the race over all: In *Imperial Democracy* (1899) "inferior" races are seen as "incapable of self-government," while the white race is possessed of "organizational and political genius."[85] Galton, who coined the term "nature versus nurture," believed that society should positively encourage the breeding of superior "types" or classes, such as Anglo-Saxons. His theory of genetic "regression" led him to hope for a brighter future for humanity. Jordan's ideas on eugenics were benign compared to Galton's, which advocated sterilization of the "failures" in breeding for improvement in "human stock."

Jordan appealed to the young London on many levels. In his admiration for boxers and other athletes, London followed Jordan's interest in the physical culture movement, as outlined in Jordan's *The Strength of Being Clean: A Study of the Quest for Unearned Happiness* (1900) and applied by Bernarr MacFadden in his writings and sanitariums. From Jordan London learned of August Weismann's *Essays Upon Heredity and Kindred Biological Problems* (1891), which inspired *Before Adam*'s racial memories (or "germ plasm"). Weisman wrote of the sudden reappearance of lost types; London supplemented that with Jordan's notion of "memory-pictures" to describe race memories, an atavistic feature not only in *Before Adam* but from *The Sea-Wolf* and "When the World Was Young" to *The Scarlet Plague* (1915).[86] During the Spanish-American War, Jordan argued that "the Anglo-Saxon or any other civilized race degenerates in the tropics," a notion that comforted London when he had to abandon the *Snark* voyage due to illness.[87] Here Jordan was influenced by Benjamin Kidd's *The Control of the Tropics* (1898), which argued that white men could not develop the world's tropical regions because they could not be acclimatized to the tropics, and also that the races there are separated from the white man "by thousands of years of development" and thus cannot on their own develop their natural resources.[88] London responded to such ideas despite the conflict they posed with his socialism. According to Joan London, "Kidd's conviction of the destiny of his race had fallen upon ground prepared to receive it. From babyhood Flora had told Jack that as Americans of original British stock they were visibly superior to their Italian, Portuguese and even Irish neighbors." London found in Kidd "not only a justification of his early prejudices, but a

thrilling explanation of his own survival through experiences and adventures which had brought death to many others. He had survived because he was fit, and he was fit because he was a member of a mighty race!"[89] Jordan also introduced London to the works of John Fiske, Ernst Haeckel, and others. Sciambra aptly summarizes Jordan as essentially a "conduit between London and the wider world of racial scholarship and theory."[90]

Ernst Haeckel (1843–1919) wrote to London on July 8, 1907, thanking him for his copy of *Before Adam*. But as early as March 1, 1900, London had written to Johns of Haeckel's widely circulated idea that *ontogeny recapitulates phylogeny*; that is, the development of an animal embryo traces the evolutionary history of its species. In *History of Creation* (1876) and *The Riddle of the Universe* (1900), Haeckel also claimed that nonwhites were incapable of inner culture and of higher mental development.[91] He invented what he called "Monism" to study the world, including animals, human beings, and society, as an evolutionary whole. London at first found Haeckel "unassailable" (*Letters*, 163–67) and called himself a Haeckelian "monist" (*Letters*, 589–90), contrasting him to John Fiske (1842–1901), a Harvard historian and philosopher and friend of Jordan's who attempted to fuse Spencer with Christianity. Eventually London rejected both of them. In his *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy* (1874), like Spencer Fiske proposes the European ideology of the "Aryan" to organize a universal body of truth obtained by science.[92] (Speaking of Fiske, Sciambra wryly notes, "None of the racialists set minor goals for themselves.")[93] Fiske thought of Indo-European languages as descended from a "single ancestral language" traceable to the legendary Aryans of the Hindu *Vedas*.[94] According to Sciambra, Fiske merged evolution and religion but Haeckel converted evolution into a religion with the obligatory call to race maintenance.[95] Though London rejected Fiske's ideas, he used some of them in forming certain "degenerate" characters (mostly white) as "atavisms," such as the dark, hairy antagonist in *The Game* (1905) or the Chauffeur in *The Scarlet Plague*. Haeckel traced superficial differences among the races using hair color and texture instead of Fiske's phrenology. This system allowed him to place Polynesians and Asians between whites and "woolly-head" races, whom he compared to apes. To Fiske asymmetrical features were also a sign of an inferior race; he believed only the Caucasian attains complete symmetry in all parts of the body, what Haeckel called "the type of perfect human beauty."[96] London sometimes praises symmetrical features and derides asymmetrical ones such as those of the Chauffeur or both the enslaved Solomon Islanders and their European masters as evidence of a lower order.

London's copy of a related book by James Francis Katherinus Hewitt (1835–1908), *The Ruling Races of Prehistoric Times* (1894), was heavily marked up by him, especially paragraphs dealing with the origins of poetry, astronomy, fire worship, wolf gods, Apollo, and Greek myths in general. On a rear leaf London noted: "Out of multitudinous memories I can trace the blending of the Southern astronomical myths with the hero myths of the north."[97] Hewitt saw Greece as the source of "northern" individualism, the myth of Apollo as sun god structuring the sun myths of Europe; nothing less than divine education led the Aryans to create the rule of law. Though the book is a slapdash collection of historical inaccuracies in its strange brew of anthropological and classical knowledge, fantasies about Aryan dominance, and, paradoxically, the demand for mass education—it appealed to London and many others of his day, especially its overarching thesis that all human development is somehow connected. For a young man absorbed with hidden identities and heredity, and busy studying racialism, Hewitt's depiction of "paths worn by the ruling races of the world through the tangled jungles of past time . . . to learn the real history of the childhood of humanity during the ages when national life began its troubled journey towards its ultimate and, as yet, unseen goal" was captivating. Its attention to social laws and customs, mythic histories, and rituals as lingering evidences of "guiding marks" to the past stoked his mythic imagination.[98] He marked passages on the importance of myth and drew from them ideas for Klondike stories.[99] He marked a large "X" in the margin at this paragraph: "I have shown that these people, who all lived before the stage of narrative history and the diffusion of syllabic and alphabetical literature, used the myth as one of their principal vehicles for the transmission of tribal, national, and racial history, and that these historical myths, made by nationally appointed mythmakers, were developed out of nature-myths."[100] London also marked a passage that described how the Aryans excelled in genealogy, poetry, beauty, but also in social order, aided by "the Celtic race." It is hard to reconcile the thinking of a young artistic genius like London with what today we would charitably recognize as utter nonsense, but it told London that within the Anglo-Saxon group the Celts generated a race of "bards" who spread racial myths in the form of old stories, who wandered freely to tell of Achilles and Siegfried.[101] This idea requires a dispensation from standard Anglo-Saxonism, which excluded the Celts, but such inconsistencies did not bother London and gave him permission to cross an imagined racial boundary. As he had earlier emphasized the linguistic nature of racial identity, he was now beginning to

think that becoming a "bard" could be his way out of the social pit, as he pondered the idea of being a "Celt" who could be whitened but remain a poet. This was to be an unbound identity that had possibilities and none of the restrictions and bourgeois yearning of learning a trade or becoming a post office clerk, which were his choices when he returned from the Yukon in summer 1898, where he had been prospecting for gold, before he committed himself to writing. Consciously or unconsciously, London the storyteller identified with Hewitt's mythic tale-spinners.[102]

But nothing in his reading had the profound and lasting impact on London as did the works of Charles Darwin (1809–1882).[103] Like most thinkers of his day, London was fascinated by Darwin: *Origin of Species* was one of only three books he packed for the Klondike. It describes evolution in lower life forms but addresses human matters of inheritance, variation, and structural homology and freely uses human behavior to illustrate aspects of animal behavior. With the publication of Thomas H. Huxley's *Evidences as to Man's Place in Nature* (1863) and Charles Lyell's *Antiquity of Man* (1863), the connection of humankind with the higher apes was made explicit. In *Descent of Man* (1871) Darwin laid out the major points linking humans to the general scheme of evolution, including racial variety caused by geographical separation. Darwin rejected what was later called social Darwinism; as he put it, "Has not the white man, who has debased his nature by making slave of his fellow Black, often wished to consider him another animal?"[104] In contrast to social Darwinists, Darwin recognized the importance of socialization and the development of language in human evolution, as well as the role of the moral sense. As he described in his famous metaphor of the "tangled bank" at the end of *Origin of Species*, "And as natural selection works solely by and for the good of each being, all corporeal and mental endowments will tend to progress towards perfection."[105] London was struck both by the inexorable nature of evolution and also by the notion that things were evolving toward perfection.

The ideas of Herbert Spencer (1820–1903) had a great impact on London's early ideas about Darwinism, even though, as with Nietzsche, he eventually rejected Spencer. In *Principles of Biology* (1864–67) Spencer applied Darwin's theories to social systems and coined the phrase "survival of the fittest," which caught on and which Darwin substituted for his formulation, "struggle for existence," in later editions of *Origin of Species*. In 1899 London wrote, "Spencer's *First Principles* [1880] alone, leaving out all the rest of his work, has done more for mankind, than a thousand books like *Nicholas Nickleby*,

Hard Cash, *Book Snobs*, and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*" (*Letters*, 102–05), all popular sellers at the time (and all concerned with social uplift). Richard Hofstadter has observed that Spencer, whom he calls the "metaphysician of the home-made intellectual," was "widely read by persons who were partly or largely self-educated."[106] The eponymous Martin Eden stops reading anything else after he discovers Spencer (which London saw as a weakness in him), in sharp contrast to the long list of writers he reads earlier in the novel, just as he quits writing once he achieves success: "At night, asleep, he lived with the gods in colossal nightmares; and awake, in the day, he went round like a somnambulist, with absent stare, gazing upon the world he had just discovered."[107] Anthony J. Naso has observed that Spencer's attempt in *First Principles* to reduce everything to a unity appealed to London as "a compact and concrete view of reality that made the universe appear as a model in which everything was subject to inevitable laws."[108] As Martin muses, "And here was the man Spencer, organizing all knowledge for him, . . . presenting to his startled gaze a universe so concrete of realization that it was like the model of a ship such as sailors make and put into bottles. There was no caprice, no choice. All was law" (*Martin Eden*, 108). Naso further observes that, in contrast, "Deeply impressed as he was with Spencer, London found himself rejecting those aspects of Spencer's philosophy that went counter to his convictions that love and loyalty have a value in human relationships and that all men must unite in the effort to improve the human condition."[109]

Spencer's social Darwinism developed between 1860 and 1903 and argued that in nature the strong flourish while the weak perish, a pattern that is also true of races and societies. "Aryans" he sees as superior, their finest manifestation one day to be realized in socialism as their natural evolutionary endpoint, but "lesser" races could not look forward to such a destiny.[110] In *Social Statics* he wrote: "The forces which are working out the great scheme of perfect happiness . . . exterminate such sections of mankind as stand in their way. . . . [The] hindrance must be got rid of."[111] Spencer warned against miscegenation and explicitly compared human breeding to animal breeding. Like Darwin he believed that when environment becomes more complex as an exterior force, an individual species' internal complexity must rise to match it so that equilibrium is maintained. Those whose responses are out of sync with external forces will die off. Unlike Darwin, he was a racialist and white supremacist and also advanced his social theories without regard to ethics or morality, or even basic human decency. His closed system explained humanity without regard of

the humane. Accordingly, Martin Eden speaks of the "mass of weaklings and inefficients who perished according to biological law. . . . Nature rejected them for the exceptional man" (329).

THEORY VERSUS REALITY

Spencer's grandiose racial abstractions inappropriately influenced London's choice of mate when London chose Bessie Maddern as his wife. Douglass Robillard's and Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin's research on London, Bessie Maddern London, and Anna Strunsky Walling has revealed their shared failure to understand the nature of mating. Anna Strunsky was born in Babinotz, Russia, on March 21, 1878, to a pair of radicals who fled Russia to San Francisco. A student at Stanford, she was interested in social problems, literature, and the labor movement; she and her sister Rose were members of a cosmopolitan intelligentsia flourishing in San Francisco. London and Strunsky participated in the activities of the Bay Area socialists; theirs became an affair of two intellectuals, and more. One Wednesday afternoon in late March 1900, London had planned to propose marriage to her, as they rested from a bicycle trip into the Berkeley hills. But Anna's coyness put him off. The genteel young woman had little experience in love, so she told him she loved him but that she had to leave for the Russian Revolution in the near future.[112] Embarrassed and frustrated, he impulsively proposed to Bessie Maddern, a friend who had been his math tutor when he was cramming to pass the entrance exams at Berkeley and whose fiancé had recently died.[113] They were married three days later. He later declared that they intended to raise "seven sturdy Saxon sons, and seven beautiful daughters."[114] But he kept up his friendship with Strunsky, actually proposing in 1902 while still with Bessie, but too late. She had discovered that Bessie was pregnant for the second time, and in a letter to him while he was in England, she regretfully broke things off.[115]

The next year, *The Kempton-Wace Letters* came out, a debate over the nature of love and sex between two fictional men, Herbert Wace, a student at Berkeley, and Dane Kempton, a British poet.[116] London, who wrote as Wace, and Strunsky, who wrote as Kempton, spent intense months working on it. Perhaps seeking to rationalize his own loveless marriage of mere "breeding" potential, London self-consciously has Wace argue that marriage is only a biological device to ensure Spencer's "race maintenance," while Strunsky's character stresses the primacy of love in marriage.[117] Wace characterizes love

as a primitive instinct, breeding as an intellectual duty. Tavernier-Courbin explains that Wace desires "to better the fate of humanity in tangible terms. . . . [with] a human elite to apply to itself the same selection process applied to the scientific breeding of animals."[118] Wace's "laws of development" mean that through natural potential men may rise from obscurity to prominence, an argument for London's newfound identity as a writer at the time. The hyperintellectual Wace also paraphrases Spencer's notion of women as obedient mothers of the race, which must have amused Strunsky, who years later wryly wondered in a letter to Charmian why they spent nearly two years writing the book "trying to convert each other to positions which, at bottom, we must both have held?"[119] Such confusion paradoxically rings true: London was always constructing and opposing one self or "house" of identity to another, even to the extent of arguing to refute himself with a woman who had refused him.

It is reasonable to assume, though his primary motivation was probably his perceived rejection by Strunsky, that in marriage to Bessie he felt the "burden" of race. He told Bessie that the propagation of the Anglo-Saxon "race" was his purpose, and that he was not in love with her nor ever would be. If they did believe they were fulfilling the natural law, Jack and Bessie strike one in retrospect as two people who truly had no idea of the real "natural laws" that operate between men and women. In proposing to Anna, a Jew, London showed that race didn't matter when love was uppermost. But racialism could serve as a convenient fallback position and rationalization for a second-best marriage.[120]

Anna Strunsky Walling was a reliable critic not only of London's writings but of his character, certainly more so than the other women who were close to him in his adulthood, Bessie and Charmian (Joan was only fourteen when her father died). She seems to have understood the conflicts in London's thinking on race versus socialism as features of his psychology and upbringing and not as representative of his ultimate values, and she hoped that they would evolve over time to resemble her own liberal views. She was largely correct. As she wrote in her obituary of London published in *The Masses* in 1917,

> He was youth, adventure, romance. He was a poet and a social revolutionist. He had a genius for friendship. He loved greatly and was greatly beloved. But how fix in words that quality of personality that made him different from everyone else in the world? How convey an idea of his magnetism and of the poetic qual-

> ity of his nature? He is the outgrowth of the struggle and the suffering of the Old Order, and he is the strength and the virtue of all its terrible and criminal vices.[121]

London, she muses, "rose out of the Abyss . . . to become as large as the race and to be identified with the forces that shape the future of mankind." She calls him "an idealist without any illusions" and "an individualist who was consecrated to the cause of mankind. As long as he lived he would strip the veils from truth and be a living protest against all the evils and injustices of society." She cogently contrasts the ideas "he flaunted" when young with those of his mature development. Early on, she recalls, "He believed in the inferiority of certain races and talked of the Anglo-Saxon people as the salt of the earth. He inclined to believe in the biological inferiority of woman to man." London "held that love is only a trap set by nature for the individual. One must not marry for love but for certain qualities discerned by the mind. This he argued in 'The Kempton-Wace Letters' brilliantly and passionately; so passionately as to again make one suspect that he was not as certain of his position as he claimed to be." Later, she recalls, London "became the most mellow of thinkers, as passionately promulgating his new ideas as he had then assailed them. He now believed in romantic love, he had helped in the agitation for woman suffrage and was jubilant over its success in California." London developed into "an absolute internationalist and anti-militarist" and laughed at himself when he recalled "how in the Russian-Japanese War he had been on the Russian side although all Socialists wanted Russia beaten for the sake of the revolutionary movement. The Russians were white men and the Japanese were not."[122] Walling elegantly caught London's strengths and his racial weaknesses and uncertainties, from philosophy to romance, and her comments also help explain his changing thinking on race beyond such cruel formulations of life as Spencer's.

London's departure from Spencer was in large part caused by his reading of the other major interpreter of Darwin of the day, Thomas Henry Huxley (1825–1895). One of the first adherents to Darwin's theory of evolution, Huxley did much to promote its acceptance among scientists and the public; he was such a passionate advocate and defender of Darwin that he was called "Darwin's Bulldog." He was particularly disdainful of Spencer's social Darwinism, which he referred to as "reasoned savagery."[123] When London encountered Huxley, he turned a much more critical eye on Spencer. As Berkove explains,

whereas many of his contemporaries were satisfied with a cursory understanding of Darwin and evolution, "London recognized that Darwinians were themselves divided over the implication of evolutionary doctrine," following the controversy and eventually shifting his allegiance to Huxley. Like Darwin himself, London was never comfortable with the amoral aspects of evolution. For Spencer the evolutionary process was salutary because it improved the breed and thus society; yet as Berkove observes, "This teleological aspect of evolution was not part of Darwin's theory but, as Hofstadter points out, it was inferred by Spencer and other contemporary conservative thinkers and subsequently retrofitted on Darwinism."[124] Huxley agreed with Darwin that the evidence for evolution was compelling, but he was troubled by Spencer's "survival of the fittest" as the only possible conclusion as evolution applied to human society. London agreed: as Berkove puts it, "for an author interested in individuals, one who championed the underdog and the oppressed, and one who was a socialist for most of his adult life, satisfaction with a doctrine that endorsed things as they were and automatically favored the system over individuals was problematic." London repeatedly shows in his fiction that merely surviving isn't enough, and that what might make one fittest in one environment would not in another, and, most of all, that there is a crucial moral dimension to understanding evolution and its impact on humanity.[125]

Huxley most cogently voiced his disagreement with Spencer in "Evolution and Ethics," the 1893 Romanes Lecture at Oxford University. Huxley saw nature unsuitable as a moral guide for humans. Social Darwinism was a "fallacy," for social progress really means "a checking of the cosmic process at every step and the substitution for it of another, which may be called an ethical process; the end of which is not the survival of those who may happen to be the fittest, but of those who are ethically the best." He insists, "Let us understand, once for all, that the ethical progress of every society depends, not on imitating the cosmic process [of evolution], still less in running away from it, but in combating it."[126] Inspired by Darwin's "tangled bank" metaphor, Huxley likened human civilization to a carefully tended garden established in the wilderness, opposing the "horticultural" to the "cosmic" process, given the garden's "artificial conditions of life, better adapted to the cultivated plants than are the conditions of the state of nature." There would always be a contest between the "State of Nature" and the "State of Art of an organized polity," and this would continue until the State of Nature eventually prevailed.[127] Though humanity cannot be comforted with visions of an ultimately victorious battle,

London agreed with Huxley that nevertheless, as Berkove states, "ethics was the way the human race should proceed, and that it should be on perpetual guard against following theories of perfection" such as Spencer's. Following Huxley, London "simultaneously believed in evolution yet trusted that however it worked out the obligation of human beings to cultivate individual ethics and pursue the goal of ethical civilization was paramount."[128] Similarly, Pizer's well-known ethical formulation of literary naturalism well fits London's interest in the moral and spiritual dimensions of Darwinism. As Pizer has argued, the "vast skepticism" that usually surrounds the naturalist hero can affirm the "worth of the skeptical or seeing temperament, of the character who continues to look for meaning in experience even though there probably is no meaning." Thus not merely survival, but at least some measure of self-knowledge—even tragically—is a possibility for a naturalist hero, and, if not for the hero, certainly for the author and reader.[129] There is a difference between determined subject matter and the concept of human beings that emerges from it: in characters conditioned and controlled by environment, instinct, or chance, there is also, Pizer notes, "a compensating humanistic value . . . which affirms the significance of the individual." Although London's individuals may seem to be pawns in an amoral world, due to heredity, race, or class, "the imagination refuses to accept this formula as the total meaning of life."[130] This is the "powerful radical center of naturalistic expression."[131]

Incorporating Darwin's theories and Huxley's analysis of them into his imaginative expression and search for identity, and later falling under the influence of Jung, London eventually found a creative self who could finally conceive of "race" as encompassing the entire human race. But it took his entire career to do so.

TWO

True North or White Silence?

Slave vs. "Zone-Conqueror" in the Klondike

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The klondike was London's first defining frontier of self and vocation. There his Anglo-Saxon identity could be tested in a stark environment in which both "natural" ability and adaptation could play a part. Instead of focusing merely on the theme of survival against the elements, London wrote stories that have much more to do with negotiated survival among racial Others in which innate characteristics can matter less than adaptability and the desire for community. In his Klondike fiction London thus turns to such conflicted racial tropes as the Noble Savage, biracialism and passing, the tragic mulatto, "double-consciousness," Darwinian competition, and projections of white anxieties and sympathies onto racial Others. His first novel, *A Daughter of the Snows* (1902), fails because of its racialist agenda, while his world-classic novella, *The Call of the Wild* (1903), draws much of its enduring mythic power from the American genre of the slave narrative with its epic conjoining of individual freedom and the search for a home.

Robert H. Redding views the Klondike Gold Rush as a romantic moment in North American history: the men and women London wrote about were largely westerners like himself from San Francisco, Portland, Seattle, and points between: "They were failed business men, hopeful youngsters, adventurers, fools, sharks, prostitutes, good people and bad. For most, it was as much the search, as the gold itself that counted. The Westward movement had died." As "inheritors of a driven past, just as London had been," and still eager for adventure, "They welcomed the North, because here was the chance to prove they were still hardy, and could cope."[1] But Canadian historian Pierre Berton offers a more naturalistic view: the Klondike Gold Rush "resembled a great war" from which it was impossible to emerge unchanged, "and those who survived it were never quite the same again." It "brutalized some and ennobled others, but the majority neither sank to the depths nor rose to the heights;

instead, their characters were tempered in the hot flame of an experience which was as much emotional as it was physical."[2] London was similarly romantic in his visions of the Klondike but realistically desperate for cash and willing to struggle for it. As a socialist he possessed a critical consciousness of the phenomenon, and as a racialist he imagined Anglo-Saxon triumph.

In the Klondike London found little gold but something more valuable: "It was in the Klondike I found myself. There nobody talks. Everybody thinks. There you get your perspective. I got mine."[3] This perspective derived from new geographies and houses of identity. He saw the terrible results of the greed for gold and the effects of white expansion upon the Indians. Not personal success in gold prospecting, but a larger theme of brotherhood characterizes the northern tales, notwithstanding his Kiplingesque race heroes whose "Anglo-Saxon" strengths pave their way to success. In the Klondike, London found a way to redefine self and society not only by journeying far away and pushing himself to the limit, but also, wearied by clashes among capital, white workingmen, and Asian immigrants in the cities back home, a welcome new arena in which he could reconsider what manhood and citizenship meant. Among his characters, white values and prowess are celebrated but also questioned and often bettered by those of Indians, so that London's internal conflicts of race, gender, and class are played out in his Klondike stories. The search for home and identity is often enacted through a recurring pattern of searching for a father.

In February 1897 London left the University of California due to lack of money; at the same time he was unsuccessful in entering into a relationship with his presumed biological father, William H. Chaney. He was working grueling days in the laundry of Belmont Academy, memorably detailed in *Martin Eden*. On July 14, 1897, he along with everyone else on the West Coast read of the forty passengers home from the Klondike who disembarked from the *Excelsior* at San Francisco, none with less than three thousand dollars in gold nuggets and dust: "So heavy was the booty they carried in bags, tin cans, and valises that they chartered the Palace Hotel bus to take them directly to the mint," Franklin Walker writes.[4] Thousands poured into San Francisco and Seattle from around the world to outfit themselves with the one ton of supplies the Canadian Mounted Police required of all entrants into the Klondike. The mayor of Seattle resigned on the spot to throw himself into the gold fever. "Prosperity is Here," boomed the *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*.[5] Few realized the magnitude of the hardships they would face in the Yukon.

On July 25, 1897, partnered with Captain James Shepard, the elderly husband of London's stepsister Eliza, London boarded the SS *Umatilla* for Port Townsend in upper Puget Sound, Washington, then the *City of Topeka* for Juneau in the Alaska purchase. Near Skagway they landed amid the mud and chaos of Dyea Beach, and dragged their supplies onto shore. Eight miles from Dyea and across from Skagway, near the base of the Chilkoot Pass that bordered Canada, Indians paddled them and their gear to a camp. By then Shepard's rheumatism had flared up; realizing he was not up to the adventure, he returned home. London, undeterred, repeatedly climbed the excruciating miles of the Chilkoot Pass with hundred-pound loads as the weather began to turn bitter. Clambering over huge crags and precipices, those who assailed the pass found that if anyone fell out of step, the line refused to let him back in, so he had no recourse but to return to the bottom and start over. But such endeavors were only to multiply, as London wrote to his former girlfriend Mabel Applegarth. He told her that after the pass he would have to hike snowed-in trails, build a raft, and cross freezing lakes and whitewater rivers: "I expect to carry 100 lbs. to the load on good trail, & on the worst, 75 lbs. That is, for every mile to the Lakes, I will have to travel 20 or 30 miles. I have 1000 lbs. in my outfit" (*Letters*, 11). Having survived the long trek that remained, then the rapids on the Yukon River to get to Dawson City, London spent the winter of 1897–98 in an old cabin on Split-Up Island, between the Stewart River and Henderson Creek, eighty miles southeast of Dawson. In the spring of 1898 he floated down the Yukon fifteen hundred miles west. When he finally reached St. Michaels on the Bering Sea, he was sick with scurvy and carrying less than five dollars in gold.

Just as he was an avid listener to the tales sourdoughs (or long-time miners) told him in Dawson's taverns, which London preferred to gold mining, he was a keen observer of the places and people—Native Americans, traders, missionaries, prospectors—he encountered on the long journey home. He returned to California late in July 1898. He began haltingly to write about his Northland experiences, and yet even at this early stage these stories bear little resemblance to his juvenile efforts before the trip. For example, in contrast to his insipid collegiate love stories, he was now able to describe the nearly unbelievable efforts of men, women, and animals in the Yukon:

> With heavy packs upon their backs men plunged waist-deep into hideous quagmires, bridged mountain torrents by felling trees across them, toiled against the

> precipitous slopes of the ice-worn mountains, and crossed the dizzy faces of innumerable glaciers. When, after incalculable toil they reached the lakes, they went into the woods, sawed pine trees into lumber by hand, and built it into boats. In these, overloaded, unseaworthy, they battled down the long chain of lakes. . . . At the rapids they ran the boats through, hit or miss, and after infinite toil and hardship, on the breast of a jarring ice flood, arrived at the Klondike.[6]

He should have added, Walker notes, that they "would suffer through a severe Arctic winter as they huddled in inadequate shelters," and that they "planned to mine in perpetually frozen ground." Indeed, the panicked mob who took part in this "preposterous" adventure, "as insane a gamble for fortune, as perverse a movement toward the wilderness to escape a crowded world, as that world has known to date," made up the last grand trek of its kind across American wilderness.[7] But only a year later, London observed, a tourist could take a steamship and railway coach into this territory "without having once soiled the lustre of his civilized foot-gear."[8]

In his journal of the Yukon River trip home, London writes of his admiration of and pity for the Natives he encounters, many of them with barely enough to eat or shelter to warm them, suffering in large part because of the changes white invasions—first by the Russians and later by Americans—caused to their lands and fishing grounds. He was especially touched by the Native girls he met who had been abandoned by white men.[9] Most of his entries contain phrases such as "describe her environment" or "method of trading," clearly notes for stories he was thinking of writing. His overall vision of the Native Americans began to develop. As Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin has observed, "Jack London's vision of Indian life was paradoxical: on the one hand, he saw it as miserable and beastly, and, on the other hand, as simple, peaceful and even idyllic."[10]

Back home in California London found that John London had died and that his time was now taken up supporting his extended family with odd jobs. He nevertheless completed his first Klondike story, "The Devil's Dice Box," in September 1898. A few months later he wrote letters describing a lonely and discouraging Christmas. But in January 1899 "To the Man on Trail" was published in *Overland Monthly*. Even more important, in July the prestigious *Atlantic Monthly* accepted "An Odyssey of the North" for its January 1900 number. London published a total of twenty-four essays, jokes, stories, and poems that year. *The Son of the Wolf* was published in early 1900. On January

15, 1901, Joan London was born and *The God of His Fathers* was published. Leaving his family behind, London lived in the East End of London in August 1902 to write *The People of the Abyss*. On October 20, 1902, his second daughter, Bess (Becky), was born, and his first novel, *A Daughter of the Snows*, was published the same day, along with *Children of the Frost*, his finest collection of Northland stories, containing his most fully developed Indian protagonists. In 1903 *The Call of the Wild* appeared, alongside *The Kempton-Wace Letters* and *The People of the Abyss*. Thus within about three years London was widely known with different audiences for his many books.

SONS, DAUGHTERS, AND THE SEARCH FOR THE FATHER

As noted earlier, in his Northland fiction, there is a pattern of the search for a father figure, for this could mean discovering a totemic self. As Jonathan Auerbach has observed of the early tale "The Son of the Wolf," London's protagonist "stands for the white race, whose sons are conceived by London as belonging to their own totemic clan which is defined by, even as it is opposed to, Native Americans. . . . [Totemic law] functions in London's fictional Northland to dictate social relations. . . . [that] depend upon racial difference." Ironically, Auerbach notes, "although the Indians in this tale argue against inter-racial marriage in order to preserve the purity of their threatened clan, the 'Wolf' Mackenzie fears no such impurity." Putting the "dread of mixed blood in the mouths of Indians," London cleverly makes his readers question their assumptions about race.[11] In stories with female Indian protagonists, the totem of the father is contested in interracial marriages made, from the point of view of the bereft fathers and tribal leaders. London creates a set of heroes opposed in race and gender terms, including white "Sons," young Indian men, Indian women (daughters), and Indian fathers (old men). The willingness on the part of white men to make interracial marriages helped undo Indian families and cultures, not the whites' racial aversion. One notes not only the dominance of white males in these stories, but also the pivotal agency the Indian brides present as active participants in their unions. Indian men are the losers.

London adopted the nickname George Sterling called him by, "Wolf," later naming his dream house Wolf House. As James Dickey has noted, to the end of his life, London "prided himself on his 'animality' and identified with his chosen totem beast, the wolf, . . . the ultimate wild creature, supreme in savagery, mystery, and beauty." For Dickey, London's mythical wolf expresses

modern humanity's need for "the wildernesses of the world, for without such ghost-animals from the depths of the human subconscious we are alone with ourselves." Coming out of the Klondike, London was "alive with ideas and a search for ultimate meaning that mounted to an obsessively personal quest. . . . [H]e came increasingly to the conclusion that the 'white silence' of the North is the indifferently triumphant demonstration of the All. . . . [In his] savage theater of extremes, where 'the slightest whisper seemed sacrilege,' London felt himself to be a man speaking out of the void of cosmic neutrality and even to it and for it."[12] London observed that much as wealthy Oakland and San Francisco residents made their wealth and status visible to those around them, totems signified success and wealth in the Northland. Whether Haida, Kwakiutl, Tlingit, or Tsimshian, sheltered by the forest and blessed with sea life for food, some tribes could afford the luxury of permanent village sites and ornamental art. A totem celebrated legends, events, or simply the wealth and crest of the family for whom it was created, a record of the past in a culture without written language. In setting out to write his own totems into world literature, London tried out successive heroic identities. In *A Daughter of the Snows* he invented an Anglo-Saxon female totem, and in *The Call of the Wild* a dog-wolf. In both cases he is *crossing*, or *passing*, not in racial terms but in terms of gender and "species." These crossings help contextualize his overall sense of racial crossing.

I have elsewhere published detailed readings of race in London's Klondike short stories and will not repeat those analyses here.[13] But before turning for the bulk of the chapter to issues of race, identity, freedom, social justice, and gender in two longer works, *A Daughter of the Snows* and *The Call of the Wild*, it is helpful to review briefly key racial tropes in the Klondike short fiction, especially family dramas of race.

When London's first Klondike stories were collected in *The Son of the Wolf* (1900), early reviewers compared him to Rudyard Kipling, Stephen Crane, Bret Harte, and Hamlin Garland, and even called him "the Tolstoi of America."[14] One noted, "We cannot pay Mr. London a higher compliment than by calling him 'The Man From Nowhere,' for that was the original sobriquet of Kipling."[15] But most reviewers stressed, as one writer puts it, London's "bitter realism," how he "tells the truth" and makes readers "feel the law behind the tragedy." This law, according to Kipling, was that the white man conquers. But in later Klondike collections, when London portrays believable Native char-

acters who must deal with the fallout from white incursions in their tribal and personal lives, reviewers complain about London's unusual diversity of characters, a "queer medley of Indians, half-breeds and pioneers from the four corners of the earth."[16] Yet even in the early tales "The Son of the Wolf" and "An Odyssey of the North," masculinity is seen as similar across racial boundaries; Native as well as white men are willing to fight for their brides.[17] Scruff Mackenzie asks for the hand of Sarinka, daughter of the chief Thling-Tinneh, a "meeting of the stone age and the steel" (*Stories*, 198). Indian rules are the ones that end up being followed. Mackenzie neither invades nor tries to take over the Indian camp; he eschews violence and the white man's technological power (guns), instead following the laws of tribe by offering gifts for his bride. When he receives no response from her or her father, he returns with his revision of the rules, a mingling of white practices with the tribe's. These rules take on a near-biblical tone: "Listen to the Law of the Wolf: *Whoso taketh the life of one Wolf, the forfeit shall ten of his people pay*" (205–06). Mackenzie then does ritual battle with the Raven men and, not surprisingly, prevails.

Auerbach asks, "Does London's primary identification between white man and the domineering Wolf make him a blatant racist? His interest in giving some voice to the 'Raven' who bestow the designation 'Wolf' on their more aggressive foes would suggest otherwise." Most discussions of turn-of-the-century theories of race assume that Anglo-Saxon supremacy was "modeled either on conquest and exploitation of the colonized subject, . . . [or] on the isolationist's dread of racial contamination altogether." But if we take London's representations of the Wolf and Raven clans seriously, "his rendering of interracial marriage throughout his Northland suggests a third, more intricate set of possibilities in keeping with early twentieth-century ethnographers and thinkers such as Sigmund Freud and Émile Durkheim. Like these thinkers, London used primitivism and totemism to help understand rapid social changes brought about by a bewildering modernity. As Auerbach observes, "These changes more immediately and personally for London concerned his own status in the social order as an ambitious working-class Nobody with no cultural capital trying to make a name for himself in publishing—to imagine his place, establish a field of kinship, as an author." For Auerbach, London reinvents "turn-of-the-century notions of manhood as well as race," in keeping with a habit of exploring absolutes in his fiction only to interrogate and demystify them:

> London implies that white manhood is a condition that must be earned, achieved and won, not passively taken for granted. Like the White Silence [of the deep north], racial categories in the Northland refer primarily to a state of mind. Here London overturns the prevailing belief of many of his contemporaries who assumed that racial difference was grounded in a set of natural, biological givens. For all his professed adherence to Darwin's theory, London's views on race more closely anticipate Durkheim.[18]

Durkheim insisted that clan affiliations in primitive societies did not depend strictly on geographical region or biological bloodlines, but rather they relied on shared totems. London's protagonists become Wolves by virtue of their will and hard work, and thus the category of whiteness is a totem available to anyone willing to learn the rules and adapt for survival. This denies race as an essential determinant of character.[19] In other tales collected in *The Son of the Wolf*, half-Indian trail guide and letter carrier Sitka Charley, like Mackenzie and the Native women of *Children of the Frost*, crosses racial lines, lending his powers of interpretation to the strange events of "The Sun-Dog Trail." In sum, though "The Son of the Wolf" is sometimes seen as one of London's most imperialist portraits of the racial battles of the Northland, there are competing crosscurrents of racial identities that are fully developed in later stories: marriages between whites and Indians, white men winning Indian women by subscribing to tribal rules, whiteness created through totems, mixed-blood Indian heroes. "An Odyssey of the North" is a tragic story of racial intermingling told by the Indian Naass, who relates his quest to retrieve his Indian bride, Unga, from a white man who stole her on their wedding night, and the deadly results of his effort. London structured it on Homer's *Odyssey*, so that a bereft and "criminal" Indian man becomes a new form of the revered Greek hero and at the same time a modern, even existentialist, figure. Of course, as critic Kirby Brown has pointed out, the narratives of Naass, Unga, and Axel Gunderson are similar to those of earlier figures of Native women, such as Malintzín or Pocahontas, who chose Europeans over Native men and have turned their back on Native custom, tradition, and lifeways. That Unga is reunited with her "rightful" husband *and* rejects him alludes to the idea that Native and European ways are incompatible. As Brown notes, here, as in the other tales of *The Son of the Wolf*, "this leaves no room for a viable Native masculinity; indeed, Naass loses his masculinity, his status as head man, and all connection to his people and his role in their continuance."[20]

Anna Strunsky's review of *The Son of the Wolf* was seemingly the only one critical of its racialism. While she heaps on praise upon the power of London's writing, she pointedly criticizes him for advancing "the pride of race . . . rumbling in majestic cadences" that tell of "the glory and the greatness" of the Anglo-Saxon:

> For the "Wolf" is a white man and an Anglo-Saxon white man, forsooth. And his sons hunt in packs and carry all things before them, for their hunger is great and their feet go in search of the food their souls demand, and they are strong and steady. . . . Human avalanches these, and great is the joy of our author in the fact. To some of us democrat-cosmopolites who thrill to the thought of Universalism, this nationalism is doughtous and this enthusiasm unworthy. We hold that race distinctions are both arbitrary and artificial and we can conceive of no logic of social events which would permit the "salt of the earth" to consist of but one ingredient—life is too rich.[21]

The stories of *The God of His Fathers* (1901) also emphasize Indian women's defiance toward their fathers and brothers, though London's focus is more on the tragic nature of the men's loss of their tribal identity with their daughters. Hybridization is less of an issue for the whites, who can return anytime to their homes in the Southland; for the Indians, it means the destruction of their way of life and systems of law. London includes moving portraits of tribal elders mourning the loss of Native lands, traditions, and daughters. As was the case with Unga in "An Odyssey of the North," in "Siwash" Native woman Killisnoo prefers her European husband, again echoing a stereotypical tradition; dying, she makes her husband Dick pledge to marry a white woman. Brown remarks that "London here seems to be a product of his times in which biological racism, theories of natural selection, morality and history were conflated in order to provide a grand justification for white supremacy. Dick and Tommy [Dick's partner] have the 'edge' because their mothers had the 'edge,' which here is obviously constructed as an attribute of race."[22] And, as London emphasized more directly in his *Yukon Diary*, Indian wives could be abandoned.

The third and most powerful book of Klondike stories, *Children of the Frost*, concludes with a trilogy of tales on the sorrows of the tribal elders, "The Death of Ligoun" (1902), "The Sickness of Lone Chief" (1902), and "The League of the Old Men," all written within one and a half months of one another. In "The League of the Old Men," Indians-turned-terrorists testify at the trial of old Imber, their leader. Here the "wisdom of the trail" has given way to the

machinery of a trial, and London leaves in doubt who is the real criminal. As Brown puts it, Imber's narrative in the courtroom is "essentially a statement against cross-breeding of whites and Natives," as the result was "the corruption of Native lifeways, cultures, traditions, and spiritualities leading to the ultimate corruption and extinction of the people." Similarly, Brown finds "Nam-Bok the Unveracious," one of the most famous stories of the collection, which tells the story of an Aleut man who returns to his people after venturing upon the westward sea, where he sails with white men and manages to visit California, a parable of internalized racism and self-hatred coupled with failed passing that points to similarities between Nam-Bok's banishment by his village and theories of the irreconcilability of Euro-Western and Native cultures, both from Euro-Western points of view and from Native ones.[23] "The League of the Old Men" also harkens back to London's earliest public self as the "Boy Socialist of Oakland" (in 1895–96) and presages his depiction of class warfare in *The Iron Heel* (1908). McClintock notes that, like this one, many Klondike stories seem to have a dual or conflicted purpose: they take on (or project) the Other's language, employing "the mellifluous style arising from the dignified language London associated with Indian speech." The idealized Indians already possess "all that London's white conquerors came to the Northland to find: individual dignity, courage, contact with and adjustment to the elemental strength of nature, and a sense of community within the tribe," and they are allowed to express this in their own words, yet the setting for their words is the white man's courtroom, and no matter how eloquent the Natives, the outcome is certain.[24]

Children of the Frost contains some of London's most racially sensitive works. But his fame in his early career was built on the worldwide success of *The Call of the Wild*. Yet here too London created a culturally comprehensive myth of an idealized self both confirming and transcending boundaries, whether racial, national, or otherwise. In contrast, his first Klondike novel, *A Daughter of the Snows*, with its confusing cross-purposes born of the dual allegiances of the author, has generally been regarded as deeply flawed, even by London himself.

RACE IN *A DAUGHTER OF THE SNOWS*

London wrote excitedly about his novel to Cloudesley Johns in the late summer of 1900, but five months later he wrote again to say, "Well, I am on the home

stretch of the novel, and it is a failure" (*Letters*, 203, 240). McClure, Phillips and Co. agreed to pay London an advance against royalties of $125 per month for five months beginning August 1, 1900, but because London made the novel twice as long as anticipated, they ended up advancing him more by the time he finished in March 1901. They then sold the rights to J. B. Lippincott Company, which published *A Daughter of the Snows* in October 1902. Looking back on his first novel, London sighed, "Lord, Lord. How I squandered into it enough stuff for a dozen novels."[25]

As Russ Kingman has noted, "London was ahead of his time liberating women when he introduced the independent, well-educated heroine, Frona Welse, . . . unconventional and free, . . . durable and different." Yet here and throughout his career "London would be accused of poor female character portrayal." The fundamental problem in Frona's character is in her "blatant Anglo-Saxon chauvinism."[26] Though *A Daughter of the Snows* reveals the Progressive Era notion of the New Woman—a figure also appearing in works by Henry James, Kate Chopin, Charlotte Perkins Gilman, Edith Wharton, Willa Cather, Sarah Orne Jewett, and others—Frona does not make a compelling or even believable New Woman. Earle Labor has termed the book "a potpourri of [London's] pet ideas on social Darwinism, Anglo-Saxon supremacy, environmentalism, and joy-through-fitness." He continues: "So preoccupied is the author with ideology that he confuses fiction with essay. . . . [T]he simple truth is that he was a born sprinter who never acquired the artistic stamina of the long-distance runner. The faults in this book were chronic ones he would commit again in later books, with their long episodic plots, strained dialogue, and characters as ideological caricatures."[27]

Even if *A Daughter of the Snows* is not successful as art, it is of much interest for the study of race in London's writings. It perfectly illustrates how unchecked racialism inevitably brings about artistic failure. Despite her description as a "ripened child of the age, and [who] fairly understood the physical world and the workings thereof," with "a love for the world, and a deep respect," Frona's rabid fantasies about racial glory (her own, particularly) make her ridiculous; even her adoring would-be husband, Vance Corliss, laughs at her and teases her about her racism.[28] Yet for the most part the narrator does not object to Frona's ideas, nor does Frona change her thinking over the course of the novel. However, exactly through the narrator, the book allows subtle doubts about Frona's character and London's intentions. For example, it should be a great life lesson to her when her ideal "race man," Gregory St. Vincent, is shown to be a

treacherous coward. St. Vincent's ruin critiques racism, university education, and social pretension—as well as "adventure." But the lesson is lost on her. Such underlying tension also arises in other instances in which the distance in racial views between narrator and characters is emphasized. But as would also be the case later on in *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore (1914), here the reader is not really sure of the narrator; at times the narrator seems to take Frona seriously and at other times expose her.

Anna Strunsky Walling and Bessie Maddern London have been suggested as models for Frona, Anna for her courageous personality and intellect and Bessie for being an Anglo-Saxon "Mother-Woman," as London called her. Features of both women are evident in Frona. Yet the names Flora (London's mother) and Frona are too similar to ignore, especially as Flora was a real struggler in life whose energy was in part fueled by her racial fantasies and prejudices. Frona is also a sort of female Jack London, speaking just as bombastically as he did when on his soapbox. For Joseph Sciambra, Frona is a Spencerian "valkyrie."[29] Charles N. Watson Jr. sees her as a "dime-novel" character such as Calamity Jane or Hurricane Nell, but he also compares her to Frank Norris's western women in *Blix* (1899) and *A Man's Woman* (1900).[30] Today the novel continues to put off readers, though it can be provocatively discussed in reference to the American New Woman figure or alongside fin de siècle race novels. In the Klondike stories interest was placed more in the quest for fatherhood, but here not a son but a daughter seeks identity. Yet overshadowing Frona's potential as a protofeminist protagonist is her obsessive need to satisfy her father, so that she becomes not a New Woman but remains an ideal daughter, for in the end she chooses her father over Corliss. The book even suggests an odd version of the male hero-myth *The Odyssey*, involving as it does the return home, adventures among miners and swindlers in Dawson, and wooing by suitors. Frona is called to "battle" and must "kill" a suitor or two in order to gain her true mate, her father, as though she is Odysseus, Penelope, and Telemachus in one. She explains everything she does in terms of her racial heritage, which makes her speeches tiresome reading—if it is all determined by race, then why be interested in what this character does? Frona's humanity and believability as a character are severely curtailed by her racialism, in contrast to how London develops his Native women characters.

In chapter 2 of *A Daughter of the Snows* Frona emerges after her own perilous journey from Skagway over the Chilkoot Pass, appearing on the land like a returning nature goddess:

> She came out of the wood of glistening birch, and with the first fires of the sun blazoning her unbound hair raced lightly across the dew-dripping meadow. . . . The flush of the morning was in her cheek, and its fire in her eyes, and she was aglow with youth and love. For she had nursed at the breast of nature,—in forfeit of a mother,—and she loved the old trees and the creeping green things with a passionate love; and the dim murmur of growing life was a gladness to her ears, and the damp earth-smells were sweet to her nostrils. (24)

Yet now there is an assortment of "wild-eyed Sticks from over the Passes, fierce Chilcats, and Queen Charlotte Islanders. And the looks they cast upon her were black and frowning" (26), though she does not trouble herself over their meaning.

Repeatedly, the obvious is not obvious to Frona, as in chapter 3 when she recalls her trek over the Chilkoot Pass and the hardy Scandinavians setting the pace ahead of her: "They were huge strapping blond-haired giants, each striding along with a hundred pounds on his back. . . . Their faces were as laughing suns, and the joy of life was in them. The toil seemed child's play and slipped from them lightly" (32). Now these men are what London's readers would expect to draw his most unadulterated Anglo-Saxon pride. Frona's admiring eyes watch the Scandinavians bravely wade into fast-moving water to retrieve the body of a dead man, but in so doing five of the six of these blond giants drown. So much for her Vikings: "A dozen feet away the steady flood of life flowed by, and Frona melted into it and went on" (34). The image of the stream to describe the moving trail of men Frona "melts" into emphasizes her odd lack of reaction to the sudden deaths of these Teutonic heroes. Frona next comes upon a man abandoned by his partners because he couldn't keep up. Instead of helping him, she lectures him on his racial unfitness: "'My friend,' and Frona knew she was speaking for the race, 'you are strong as they. You can work just as hard as they; pack as much. But you are weak of heart. This is no place for the weak of heart. . . . Therefore the country has no use for you. The north wants strong men,—strong of soul, not body. The body does not count. So go back to the States. We do not want you here'" (38). Had Frona been a man this speech might have earned her a black eye. Since the death of the Scandinavians does not seem to have caused her to question her stereotypes, unconsciously she shifts the problem from the body to the "heart" as the important racial survival factor. As we know from their having voluntarily endangered themselves in order to retrieve a corpse, however, the Scandinavians

did not lack heart. Not only are such lapses in logic unfortunately common in this novel, they lie at its heart. It is as though there are two Londons behind the curtain: one projected into the Anglo-Saxon heroine, and one who snickers at the obvious contradictions she misses. The tension this duality produces helps explain why London drowns five hearty Vikings before Frona's eyes in the novel's first few pages.

But London's narrator is by no means consistently ironic in *A Daughter of the Snows*. The description in chapter 5 of Frona's father, bonanza king Jacob Welse, closely echoes the young London's own fantasy of his "father," John London, as well as notions of his mother's background:

> The trapper father had come of the sturdy Welsh stock which trickled into early Ohio out of the jostling East, and the mother was a nomadic daughter of the Irish emigrant settlers of Ontario. From both sides came the Wanderlust of the blood, the fever to be moving, to be pushing on to the edge of things. In the first year of his life, ere he had learned the way of his legs, Jacob Welse had wandered a-horse through a thousand miles of wilderness, and wintered in a hunting-lodge on the head-waters of the Red River of the North. (56)

Jacob Welse's great success notwithstanding, it is odd that London makes him Welsh (even giving him a surname that suggests "Welsh") when in Frona's eyes he is supposed to be an Anglo-Saxon hero. Also puzzling is that Frona's mother is first called Irish and then later Saxon.[31] If London's aim were to promote ideas of Anglo-Saxon supremacy, he would have made these key characters purely Anglo-Saxon. True, the distinctions between "Anglo Saxon" and "Caucasian" were beginning to blur for Nordics or Celts about this time, as noted in chapter 1, but there is more racial ambiguity and crossing of racial lines going on in this novel than one first expects.

Like Spencer, Frona is an abstract thinker (and one needs to remind oneself that at the time the book was published she would be read as an intellectually aware young woman): "The world was made for the strong, and only the strong inherited it. . . . To be honest was to be strong. To sin was to weaken. . . . Brain was greater than body. The man with the brain could best conquer things primitive" (58). But London's problem with her character here as elsewhere is that it is hard to imagine a young woman, no matter how well-versed in racialist theory, or any human being who would actually speak lines like these in conversation, but London has her recite many such speeches. The only person willing to argue with Frona's social Darwinism is Corliss. In chapter 8 she

snaps at him, "'And why should I not be proud of my race?'" The narrative continues: "Frona's cheeks were flushed and her eyes sparkling. They had both been harking back to childhood, and she had been telling Corliss of her mother, whom she faintly remembered. Fair and flaxen-haired, typically Saxon." Corliss deems himself "too large for race egotism and insular prejudice, and had seen fit to laugh at her immature convictions." Race pride, he tells her gently, is "'a common characteristic of all peoples . . . to consider themselves superior races,—a naive, natural egoism, very healthy and very good, but none the less manifestly untrue.'" Frona tries to interrupt, saying that the Germanic race has withstood the test of time: "'We are the best fitted!'" she cries. His response: "'Egotism.'" But again, to his amusement, Frona objects:

> "We are a race of doers and fighters, of globe-encirclers and zone-conquerors. We toil and struggle, and stand by the toil and struggle no matter how hopeless it may be. While we are persistent and resistant, we are so made that we fit ourselves to the most diverse conditions. Will the Indian, the Negro, or the Mongol ever conquer the Teuton? Surely not! . . . All that the other races are not, the Anglo-Saxon, or Teuton if you please, is. All that the other races have not, the Teuton has. What race is to rise up and overwhelm us?" (83)

Corliss laughs and says, "'We are not God's, but Nature's chosen people. . . . Let us arise and go forth!'" But she retorts, "'Why have you fared into the north, if not to lay hands on the race legacy?'" (84).

In chapter 12 St. Vincent spins his false history about being captured by the barbaric Chow Chuen or Deer Men from the eastern Siberian coast; though he begins as their slave, he becomes "a man of importance" whose advice, medicine, and surgery are welcomed in the tribe. Such facility for traversing racial boundaries is a distinguishing feature of many of London's heroes, but in this case, St. Vincent is lying. Frona goes off to bed thinking him "[a] brave man, . . . a splendid type of the race" (130). The next morning she is still smitten with his "healthful, optimistic spirit" that "corresponded well to her idealized natural man and favorite racial type" (133).

Perhaps Corliss decides to cater to Frona's racial ideas to win her back, for shortly afterward he speaks of his own "Viking" ancestry and recites Norse heroic poetry. Corliss imagines Frona as "the genius of the race. The traditions of the blood laid hold of him, and he felt strangely at one with the white-skinned, yellow-haired giants of the younger world" (147). This feeling moves him to propose to her, but she angrily tells him that she did not come to the Klondike

to be married. She apparently came to please her father, a trait at odds with her destiny as a mother of the Anglo-Saxon race. Later her father tells her, "'When they said your boat was coming, death rose and walked on the one hand of me, and on the other life everlasting. Made or marred; made or marred,—the words rang through my brain till they maddened me. Would the Welse remain the Welse? Would the blood persist? Would the young shoot rise straight and tall and strong, green with sap and fresh and vigorous?'" (176).

Frona and Corliss's racial mettle is tested when they set out in chapter 25 to rescue men stranded by the break-up of the Yukon ice, a scene that parallels the earlier drowning of the Scandinavians—perhaps London intends Frona to redeem the "Teuton" in this episode. As they paddle the dangerous river Corliss contrasts her with his own maternal ancestors: "And when he thought of the woman behind him, and felt the dip and lift, dip and lift, of her paddle, his mother's women came back to him, one by one, and passed in long review,—pale, glimmering ghosts, he thought, caricatures of the stock which had replenished the earth, and which would continue to replenish the earth" (259). This revives the notion that Frona is to be a race mother and indicates Corliss's own racial prejudices. Oddly, however, it sounds as though he is thinking that Frona has something earthier than do the fine, white, sexless women in his family, as though one can be "too white." Suddenly they are wrecked and must fight off their deranged comrade Tommy, barely surviving. On shore they stumble upon a cabin in which an ad hoc court of miners is trying St. Vincent for murder. Frona and Corliss are joined by Jacob Welse, the Baron Courbertin, and Del Bishop, who step in to defend St. Vincent.

It turns out that St. Vincent swiped the story of his enslavement by the Deer Men from a journal of a Russian missionary priest, Father Yakontsk, who really was enslaved in eastern Siberia; Bishop has the journal translated to expose St. Vincent. Yet Frona, Welse, the baron, and their party still try to save St. Vincent because he is one of them in a way the other miners are not, what they define as a racially pure type and an educated man. Jacob Welse believes that ad hoc miners' meetings such as this one should be a thing of the past and advocates taking the accused to a court of the queen's government. Welse, like Matt McCarthy before him, has sized up St. Vincent as a coward incapable of murder. Their attempt at rescuing St. Vincent is comically thwarted by a hammer thrown at Jacob Welse by the "judge," miner Bill Brown, a suggestion of a labor revolt against capital, hammer and all. St. Vincent's attempt to flee is thwarted by a man known as Pierre La Flitche, whom the Welses call a

"breed" (meaning "half-breed"), then by a group of men acting as "the hanging committee," and finally by Tim Dugan, "a stalwart Celt." But, like Marcus Schouler in *McTeague*, St. Vincent bites, burying his teeth in Dugan's arm. Frona gently talks him into releasing Dugan and tells him that even though he is to die, "'At least you can be a man. It is all that remains.'" In this scene a series of small but cogent oppositions frustrate London's racialist themes: St. Vincent is a liar exposed by the act of translating another culture; he is tackled by a "half-breed"; he bites. What is London's purpose in such details?

One wonders about this even more when, his neck in the noose, St. Vincent suddenly confesses what really happened. He is no murderer but something worse according to Northland code: a coward who abandoned his partner. When John Borg was attacked by an Indian man, St. Vincent pretended to sleep and although he had a revolver did nothing to stop the struggle between the men. Borg managed to get St. Vincent's gun and killed his Indian wife Bella, then struggled with the Indian. More shots were fired; the Indian escaped; Borg died. The crowd does not believe St. Vincent, but they do believe a boatman who suddenly arrives with the injured Indian, Gow, who has his own story. La Flitche, who understands some of the "dim-remembered words" of the "Stick talk of the Upper White" (328), acts as Gow's mouthpiece to tell his story in Gow's last words before he succumbs to his injuries. I quote Gow's confession speech in its entirety because it is the best thing in *A Daughter of the Snows*, resonating with the values of justice, masculinity, and protecting one's race, while Frona's paragon of white superiority is a rank coward who has a noose around his neck:

> "This man make true talk. He come from White River, way up. He cannot understand. He surprised very much, so many white men. He never think so many white men in the world. He die soon. His name Gow.
>
> "Long time ago, three year, this man John Borg go to this man Gow's country. He hunt, he bring plenty meat to the camp, wherefore White River Sticks like him. Gow have one squaw, Pisk-ku. Bime-by John Borg make preparation to go 'way. He go to Gow, and he say, 'Give me your squaw. We trade. For her I give you many things.' But Gow say no. Pisk-ku good squaw. No woman sew moccasin like she. She tan moose-skin the best, and make the softest leather. He like Pisk-ku. Then John Borg say he don't care; he want Pisk-ku. Then they have a skookum big fight, and Pisk-ku go 'way with John Borg. She no want to go 'way, but she go anyway. Borg call her 'Bella,' and give her plenty good things, but she like Gow

all the time." La Flitche pointed to the scar which ran down the forehead and past the eye of the Indian. "John Borg he do that."

"Long time Gow pretty near die. Then he get well, but his head sick. He don't know nobody. Don't know his father, his mother, or anything. Just like a little baby. Just like that. Then one day, quick, click! something snap, and his head get well all at once. He know his father and mother, he remember Pisk-ku, he remember everything. His father say John Borg go down river. Then Gow go down river. Spring-time, ice very bad. He very much afraid, so many white men, and when he come to this place he travel by night. Nobody see him 'tall, but he see everybody. He like a cat, see in the dark. Somehow, he come straight to John Borg's cabin. He do not know how this was, except that the work he had to do was good work."

St. Vincent pressed Frona's hand, but she shook her fingers clear and withdrew a step.

"He see Pisk-ku feed the dogs, and he have talk with her. That night he come and she open the door. Then you know that which was done. St. Vincent do nothing, Borg kill Bella. Gow kill Borg. Borg kill Gow, for Gow die pretty quick. Borg have strong arm. Gow sick inside, all smashed up. Gow no care; Pisk-ku dead." (329–30)

Again, we wonder what London's point could have been in writing a speech so seemingly antithetical to his supposed racialist theories.

In the last chapter Frona tells off her once-adored St. Vincent. Sounding remarkably like Jacob Welse, she tells him why his kisses have "cheapened" her: "Because you broke the faith of food and blanket. Because you broke salt with a man, and then watched that man fight unequally for life without lifting your hand. Why, I had rather you had died in defending him; the memory of you would have been good. Yes, I had rather you had killed him yourself. At least, it would have shown there was blood in your body'" (333). Frona asks Corliss to take her to Dawson, from whence she may or may not accompany her father on international business. Just as Maud Brewster's and Humphrey Van Weyden's silliness in the last paragraphs of *The Sea-Wolf* (1904) would cause readers like Ambrose Bierce to complain of London's "sexless lovers," with their "absurd suppressions and impossible proprieties," Frona's eyelash-batting in the final scene at first seems a reversion to Corliss's fine "ghosts" of women, similar to Ruth Morse of *Martin Eden* (1909).[32] But it also indicates her choice of father over mate, at odds with her Spencerian role as race mother. Yet as

we have seen, *A Daughter of the Snows* seems almost perversely unwilling to adhere to any logic, sexual or racial, instead offering a confusing and clumsy pattern of slippages of gender and racial ideas. It is at once too abstract and too personal to be effective. It may have functioned psychologically for the author, perhaps helping him subdue and nullify his anxieties about his parentage, which through Frona could be both totemized for strong survival skills but also vilified for closed-mindedness, while a new allegiance is forged with a father totem. London could fantasize about a strong father like Jacob Welse but also imagine the voice of Gow, the articulate Indian who tries, like Welse, to make a home and keep it. The book also speaks to London's growing doubts about marrying for "racial" reasons, as the novel ends with Frona unwed, unengaged, and planning to travel. In the end, racial ideas comply with personal and gendered needs, while they impede artistic ones.

THE CALL OF THE WILD AS SLAVE NARRATIVE

"Jack London is the most widely read American writer in the world," E. L. Doctorow observed in 1988, in large part because of the remarkable novella *The Call of the Wild*.[33] Earle Labor sees it as "America's greatest world novel."[34] Alfred Kazin calls Buck "London's greatest invention."[35] The story of this dog is enjoyed by nearly all ages. Today the title phrase is a household expression: one constantly sees it used in ads from *Sports Illustrated* to *Vogue* accompanying safari guns or leopard-print high heels, as well as headlines and captions in newspaper and magazine travel sections. The novel itself appears on thousands of course syllabi every year and is often one of a handful of books incoming college freshmen have already read.

Critics have seen *The Call of the Wild* as an example of Adamic innocence or redemption.[36] Watson points out that it shares with *Huckleberry Finn* "the perennial American dream of escape and freedom associated with the natural world" that London believed was a better world.[37] It is increasingly read as autobiographical. Buck's "climactic surrender to violence" is described by James Giles as the very thing that allowed London to face his own childhood suffering.[38] Andrew Sinclair reads the book as London's record "of his own childish fears of cold, deprivation, and solitude, as well as his compulsion to be always free and roving, on the hunt to gratify every desire."[39] Tavernier-Courbin sees London losing himself "in a world of beauty and purity" in contrast to his own impoverished background and the confines of his steadily deteriorat-

ing first marriage.[40] Her book-length study of the novel characterizes it as a "naturalistic romance," a blended genre emblematic of London's conflicts among different sides of himself, especially individualism and socialism. London imagines an arena ruled over by the neutral god of Nature, where survival is fair because the god is truly impartial.[41] Some regard the book as spiritual or professional autobiography: Walker sees London and Buck as "making [the] effort to be successful, to win in the fight, and to be loved," and Dickey finds the quintessential Jack London "in the on-rushing compulsive-ness of his northern stories. Few men have more convincingly examined the connection between the creative powers of the individual writer and the unconscious drive to breed and to survive, found in the natural world."[42] As though answering Dickey's call, Auerbach traces in *The Call of the Wild* the development of the writer's maturing conception of himself and his craft.[43] Sciambra reads *The Call of the Wild* as a Darwinian working-out of "the conflict of the yearning for freedom and power with the desire to be part of the strong group. Within the wolf pack, Buck finds the ideal situation. There are no weaklings in a wolf pack; there is no love, no kindness. Only the fittest survive."[44]

London's observations of the hopeless lives of the poor in the East End of London in *The People of the Abyss* also helped inspire his visions of release and escape from industrial civilization, as he advocated emigration by Britons to the wild spaces of the North American West. *The Call of the Wild* is thus an adventure story layered with not only the author's psychology but his politics, a romance imbued with a shrewd naturalist sense of nature and also a forecast of the modern alienated hero. Like *Huckleberry Finn*, at its core it is a fight for survival against the restrictions of an enslaving "civilization," a radical, naturalist revision of the fluidity of American identity at the turn of the century, its hero a key component in the restless national character. But whereas in *Huckleberry Finn* Twain features the slave as a heroic companion to his fully voiced white hero, and in *Moby-Dick* Melville sublimates much of his racial content into symbol and allegory and sacrifices his "black" heroic character Queequeg, London makes the slave the protagonist.

Such characteristically U.S. genres as the New World discovery narrative, the frontier adventure, the trickster tale, the animal fable, and the captivity narrative helped shape *The Call of the Wild*. But it is most clearly beholden to the slave narrative, the genre of heroic personal narratives by African Americans who were freed or who escaped from slavery. Counterintuitive though it seems that a proponent of white Anglo-Saxon supremacy should write a

definitive American saga in the form of a slave narrative, it is consistent with London's personality and personal beliefs. London could not have ignored the national drama of race in the nation's immediate past and present. Feeling enslaved by poverty and by rejection from his mother, taking the wolf as his totem, he saw as meaningless the drudgery of the working class "wage slaves" or "work beasts" as a form of slavery. And as a reader of Twain and Stowe he could not but have been drawn to slaves' stories of individual and communal heroism in their rise from the depths of society to recognition and new identity. Most importantly, from childhood on he heard the slave narrative of Virginia Prentiss, and slavery was thus not a mere idea but a reality to him, whether of African Americans or the white and immigrant wage slaves of the lower-class working world; it is a repeated feature in his fiction. His experiences in the Klondike had furnished him the imaginary space to express in *The Call of the Wild* new personal and artistic identities, where he combined his yearning for independence with his developing ideas on community and socialism. London often created heroes of a common denominator who struggle against powerful forces that would obliterate them if unchecked—child laborers, racial others, slaves, worn-down boxers, hobos, mutinous sailors, and so on—though not usually as "common" as a dog. His choice of a canine rather than a human point of view allowed London to explore in both a naturalistic and mythic narrative the most basic issues of human individuality and community, without resorting to a hero of any race or culture. Hence the novella's near-universal popularity among its millions of readers each year. One might also point out that this was an evasion of specifically the African American slave, a subject that did not faze Harriett Beecher Stowe. But London wrote this book, I think, not out of any conscious desire to create an accurate version of slavery in the United States, but to express a less political and intensely personal insight into the "commonality" of oppression and the need for escape.

The traditional slave narrative combines elements of a personal, romantic enlightenment with the harsh naturalistic facts of survival. From 1760 to 1947 more than two hundred book-length slave narratives were published in the United States and England, such as *The Confessions of Nat Turner* (1831), *The Narrative of William Wells Brown, a Fugitive Slave* (1849), *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845), and Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery* (1901). As Donna M. Campbell has observed, "An essential part of the anti-slavery movement, these narratives drew on Biblical allusion and imagery, the rhetoric of abolitionism, the traditions of the captivity narrative, and

the spiritual autobiography in appealing to their (often white) audiences."[45] William Andrews has also described the slave narrative as romantic but emphasizes its naturalistic features too: "Under slavery, civilization reverts to a Hobbesian state of nature; if left to its own devices slavery will pervert master and mistress into monsters of cupidity and power-madness and reduce their servant to a nearly helpless object of exploitation and cruelty."[46]

Thus the slave narrator portrays slavery as a condition of extreme physical, intellectual, emotional, and spiritual deprivation, a hell on earth, but, as Campbell emphasizes, there is the teleology of redemption: "Precipitating the narrator's decision to escape is some sort of personal crisis . . . in which hope contends with despair for the spirit of the slave. Impelled by faith in God and a commitment to liberty and human dignity comparable (the slave narrative often stresses) to that of America's Founding Fathers, the slave undertakes an arduous quest for freedom that climaxes in his or her arrival in the North." Campbell identifies frequent motifs such as direct or indirect exposure to abuse, including whipping, sexual abuse, and starvation; white owners' hypocrisy and inconstancy; the repeated raising of a narrator's expectations only to have them dashed by whites; the quest for self-expression; the quest for freedom; vignettes of character types within the experience of slavery, both those who succeed and those who fail; ending with overt appeals to the audience.[47] Frances Smith Foster similarly traces the characteristic pattern: "The plot of the nineteenth-century slave narrative is informed by the Judeo-Christian mythological structure on both the material and the spiritual levels. The action moves from the idyllic life of a garden of Eden into the wilderness, the struggle for survival, the providential help, and the arrival into the Promised Land." It features parallel structure "of birth into death and death into birth. First comes a loss of innocence, the "awareness of what it means to be a slave. This can be compared to the descent from perfection or mortification." As the slave learns the meaning of slavery, "he also tries to purge himself of those elements that would facilitate enslavement." Afterward develops the slave's realization of alternatives to bondage and "the formulation of a resolve to be free. . . . The resolution to quit slavery is, in effect, a climax to a conversion experience." The third phase is the escape, and the fourth that of freedom obtained: "arrival at the City of God or the New Jerusalem." The slave narrator "is abruptly brought from a state of protected innocence to confrontation with the evil of slavery and captivity; suffers from forced existence in an alien society; is unable to submit or effectively to resist; and balances a yearning for

freedom against the perils of escape; sees his or her condition as a symbol of the suffering condition of all the lowly and oppressed; and grows in moral and spiritual strength as a result of suffering and torment."[48]

Every one of these slave narrative elements—romantic and naturalistic—is manifested in *The Call of the Wild*, and very nearly in this exact order. Buck doesn't do all of these things himself, but the most important motif, the suffering that leads to "spiritual strength," is the keynote of the novel's conclusion, with Buck finally rewarded with the identity of the Ghost Dog. He has not just been dragged north as a slave but has answered a salvific call in the north to become himself in a way not possible in the Southland. But in order to meet his destiny Buck must become first the author of it.

The dog who inspired Buck was Jack, a mixed St. Bernard and collie or German shepherd owned by London's Klondike friends Louis and Marshall Bond, and London based "Judge Miller's place" on the Bond family home in Santa Clara. Marshall Bond believed London changed the dog's name because he didn't want to use his own "for a dog hero": London himself said that he got the name from a list of dog names he kept, choosing Buck over Bright because the former sounding "stronger."[49] The name Buck was also used by whites before and after the Civil War to denote a black man. Similarly, Philip S. Foner has noted that "it is interesting in light of his phobia about mixed breeds that London's brave and dignified dog-hero should be a mongrel."[50] As a surrogate self, Buck is asked by his creator to serve a number of selves: a "mongrel," an Anglo-Saxon totem, an abysmal brute, and an escaped work-beast who in the end brings about his own salvation.

The story begins at Judge Miller's "big house in the sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley," back from the road, hidden by trees, surrounded by a "wide cool veranda" on four sides. A long gravel drive winds through spreading lawns "under the interlacing boughs of tall poplars," while in the rear are arranged "great stables, where a dozen grooms and boys held forth, rows of vine-clad servants' cottages, and endless and orderly array of outhouses, long grape arbors, green pastures, orchards, and berry patches"—in a word, an idealized version of a southern plantation.[51] Buck is a prized house servant who lords it over the lesser dogs and who thinks that he also rules the humans: "And over this great demesne Buck ruled." Neither house nor kennel dog, Buck has the run of the place, "for he was king,—king over all creeping, crawling, flying things of Judge Miller's place, humans included" (note the language of Genesis). Identifying Buck with a king reflects the common slave narra-

tive feature of the teller's proud African ancestry. As a "sated aristocrat" and "country gentleman" (18–19), Buck's estimation of himself recalls the typical slave narrative beginning with an Edenic setting, but Edenic only because of the ignorance of the slave-protagonist: Buck is no lord, and he is not safe.

Manuel, a garden helper, kidnaps Buck and sells him as a Klondike sled dog. The economics of the "yellow metal" that "men, groping in the Arctic darkness" have unearthed also generates the economics of Manuel: "Manuel had one besetting sin. He loved to play Chinese lottery. Also in his gambling, he had one besetting weakness—faith in a system; and this made his damnation certain. For to play a system requires money, while the wages of a gardener's helper do not lap over the needs of a wife and numerous progeny" (19).[52] This passage suggests that "yellowness," whether expressed in Mexican-ness or Chinese-ness, is somehow at fault for what happens. But in a broader sense London is targeting the entire economic system that drives Manuel, the Judge, and the need for the yellow metal of the Klondike Gold Rush. The kidnapping is racialized through the identity of Manuel as a stereotypically treacherous Mexican, but the comment that Manuel's faith in a system points not to his own sin but to a larger faith in a machinelike capitalist establishment that exists for the betterment of men like the Judge, based on the labor of poor workers like Manuel. Manuel and Buck are thus both victims of the capitalist system.

Buck is manhandled by the men who buy him and choked senseless with a rope before he is dumped into a crate and then into a wagon, bound for a train north. The journey north replicates the slave passage across the Atlantic, complete with abuse, an alien terrain, and foreign languages. En route to the Northland Buck is starved for food and water and beaten by the man in the red sweater: "That club was a revelation. It was his introduction to the reign of primitive law. . . . The facts of life took on a fiercer aspect; and while he faced that aspect uncowed, he faced it with all the latent cunning of his nature aroused" (32–33). Like African slaves Buck is sold for cash on the block upon his arrival in his New World. Purchased by François and Perrault, he has to learn their language. These men are of a different race, Buck believes, than the Judge and his family: "Perrault was a French-Canadian, and swarthy; but François was a French-Canadian half-breed, and twice as swarthy. They were a new kind of men" (37). (For a dog, Buck displays remarkable powers of racial perception.) As the *Narwhal* (note the allusion to whiteness) steams north with François, Perrault, and Buck aboard, at the end of the chapter Buck is

greeted with a literal first taste of the Northland, fittingly, a fall of fresh white snow, which he has never seen before, an emblem of the White Silence he will face. Whiteness suggests the white skin of the conquerors—as when London repeatedly refers to a covering of snow as "skin"—but it can also symbolize an inner spiritual deadness, as in "In a Far Country" or the White Logic of *John Barleycorn* (see my chapter 7). Yet as noted earlier, Tavernier-Courbin finds that "Despite its literal and symbolic coldness, despite its awesome power and immensity, despite its lack of forgiveness for errors and weaknesses, the White Silence, the vast, still, and frozen Northland wilderness, is a symbol of freedom and purity. While the minds and bodies of survivors rot slowly in the putrid slums, the White Silence provides a moral and physical school of endurance over which presides a harsh but just God."[53] Such an impartial justice on a naturalistic level playing field of survival is the only thing that London, realistically, could imagine stronger than the capitalist-slave system that enveloped him. In some part, writing Buck's quest for freedom and selfhood was an attempt to combat the White Logic and reply to the White Silence. London's efforts to respond to this great silence could be read as a belief in a new identity for himself that could be betrayed by slavery, a condition to be imaginatively overcome.

After Buck faces the "nightmare" of Dyea Beach, with its teeming men and dogs, "shock and surprise" rampant, the miners and sled-dogs "savages, all of them," he witnesses the death of Curly, whose friendly approach to another dog results in her being torn to pieces. The attacker, Spitz, is a huge white husky: "So that was the way. No fair play. Once down, that was the end of you" (45). Spitz, the leader, and Dave, the "wheel dog," help the men teach Buck the ways of the sled, and Buck learns "queek," as they say. He resents having the sled harness placed upon him, "such as he had seen the grooms put on the horses at home," but though his "dignity [is] made sore by thus being a draught animal, he was too wise to rebel" (46). Each dog is portrayed as a character type only: Spitz the lead dog, Dave the hard worker, Billee the timid, Sol-eks the "Angry One." Such broad characterizations are similar to those in the slave narrative, with its vignettes of other character types, those who succeed and those who fail.[54] The other dogs each teach Buck lessons about his own survival. They also reflect the Darwinian adaptation Buck increasingly exhibits.

As his education progresses, Buck must interpret his surroundings, as when he learns to sleep under the snow. By adapting, Buck engages in self-discovery,

as when his first theft of food marks him "as fit to survive in the hostile Northland environment," dispensing with civilized morality: "His development (or retrogression) was rapid" (59). These developments correspond to what Foster called "the descent from perfection or mortification" in the slave narrative": "The mortification process includes purgation, for as the slave learns the meaning of slavery, he also tries to purge himself of those elements that would facilitate enslavement."[55]

Buck becomes distracted by the sense of a nascent, Other self, of "the old life within him." On the cold and still nights, he joins the other dogs and "pointed his nose at a star and howled long and wolflike, it was his ancestors, dead and dust, pointing nose at a star and howling down through the centuries and through him, . . . what to them was the meaning of the stillness, and the cold, and dark" (62). The dogs sing their "defiance of life" at the aurora borealis, "with long-drawn wailings and half-sobs, and was more the pleading of life, the articulate travail of existence, . . . one of the first songs of the younger world in a day when songs were sad" (84). Like slaves singing at dusk, these sad spirituals express fear of the unknown, but also a claim to a shared identity. Yet the narrator ironically comments, "Thus, as token of what a puppet thing life is, the ancient song surged through him and he came into his own again; and he came because men had found a yellow gold in the North, and because Manuel was a gardener's helper whose wages did not lap over the needs of his wife and divers small copies of himself" (62–63). The reality of Buck's slavery is once again enforced, this time just at the moment of his fantasy of a primitive self. The lesson is that unless Buck can transcend the entire system that enslaves him, he will not achieve selfhood.

The title of "The Dominant Primordial Beast" chapter, Dan Dyer points out, "refers not only to Buck but to Jack London himself," using the words of a promotional booklet Macmillan issued that described how London's "sturdy ancestral stock" enabled him "to prove his mastery over environment."[56] Buck begins to challenge Spitz, and canine discipline breaks down. The dogs squabble like children, join in the heady chase of the snowshoe rabbit, and witness the final leadership confrontation in Buck's fight with Spitz, in which Buck tears at his "snow-white throat" where "life bubbled near the surface" (94). Buck wins through "imagination" as well as strength, using both experience of other fights and his "head" in planning his attack. The end of the chapter is whiteout: "The dark circle became a dot on the moon-flooded snow as Spitz disappeared from view. Buck stood and looked on, the successful champion,

the dominant primordial beast who had made his kill and found it good" (99). Buck takes from Spitz the role of the father-leader, which importance the narrator elevates by borrowing language from the Creator himself in Genesis 1. True, Buck has gained in power, but the important battle has been and will be within, eventually to erase the identification with man altogether. The title of the next chapter, "Who Has Won to Mastership," suggests that Buck is still deluded by his role as a "master" among fellow slaves.

Despite a record run, in which Buck feels pride as the leader of the team, the team is sold to a "Scotch half-breed" mail carrier. Though Buck is said to be half "Scotch Shepherd," he forms no bond with this new master, who seems only interested in working the dogs as hard as he can. François embraces Buck to say good-bye and weeps, but it is all (human) business. The reality of his present situation is further brought home to Buck through the death of Dave, who falters in the traces and desperately tries to keep up his work. Dave is shot out of mercy, the team haunted by his death. Buck feels torn between his desire to be the leader under the sway of the men and to realize his own identity. The bitter absurdity of Dave's resistance and desire to serve men to his dying breath, to be the perfect slave, cannot be lost on Buck.[57] Buck not only seeks a way to work but is looking beyond this aspect of civilization to a more radical self.[58]

Buck's growing self-awareness recalls Foster's description of the slave's "realization of alternatives to bondage and the formulation of a resolve to be free," part of his "ascent to the ideal," a resolution to quit slavery, in effect, as "a conversion experience."[59] This is what has been going on in Buck's dreams of the "younger world." Yet he sees money change hands again, "and knew that the Scotch half-breed and the mail-train drivers were passing out of his life on the heels of Perrault and François and the others who had gone before" (110). Though he does not to flee them, he feels apprehensive about his disorderly new masters. If ever any slave contemplated escape it would be from such people; but the lesson is that the slave is at the mercy of the master, no matter how good or bad. Buck will not be able to find any meaning in working for Hal, Charles, and Mercedes. The party is complete with effeminate, ineffectual men and a flighty, hysterical mistress who insists she be treated with "gentlemanly chivalry" and who places all their lives in danger to satisfy her foolish wants, including underfeeding the dogs nearly to starvation after spoiling them by overfeeding. The dogs begin to die off, and the party disintegrates into rage and self-pity, especially the "pretty and soft" Mercedes, who, when told

to get off and walk so the sled can carry enough food for the dogs, "wept and importuned Heaven" (144). Mercedes is a stereotype of a foolish plantation mistress, down to her mistreatment of the slaves in the guise of kindness, and the new owners resemble a dysfunctional family straight out of a Tennessee Williams play. Buck is rescued from death by John Thornton, who, when he sees Buck being brutally beaten by Hal, utters "a cry that was inarticulate and more like the cry of an animal" (153), a cry that connects to Buck's growing awareness of his own primitive self as expressed in his howling. For a time, the gold-miner Thornton is to be the ideal master, indeed, Buck's god. "'You poor devil,'" says the new God-Father, and Buck licks his hand.

Buck slowly recovers his strength and enters into the community ruled by Thornton. He meets Thornton's dogs, including Nig, a friendly bloodhound and deerhound mix "with eyes that laughed and a boundless good nature" (162).[60] Nig and the other dogs pose no threat to Buck, and with Thornton he finds "love, genuine passionate love," for the first time (though the name Nig ought to tell Buck something). Although their relationship is very different from the much more restrained and distant relations he maintained with the Judge, it is a reenactment of that subservient relationship after all, no matter how beloved he is or how ideal a master Thornton is. As Buck dwells with Thornton, he increasingly feels the call of the "shades" of the past: "in spite of this great love he bore John Thornton, which seemed to bespeak the soft civilizing influence, the strain of the primitive, which the Northland had aroused in him, remained alive and active" (166). We also learn that "the eternity behind him throbbed through him in a mighty rhythm to which he swayed as the tides and seasons swayed" (168). This is birth imagery, signaling that Buck is about to undergo a final metamorphosis into his true self. Ironically, the past is the source of his future.

As Foster sees the slave narrative as part of Judeo-Christian mythology, she traces its development from "the idyllic life of a garden of Eden into the wilderness," to face the struggle for survival, encounter "providential help," and arrive into "the Promised Land." Thus for awhile Buck thinks he has entered into God's heavenly kingdom, a stage of the slave's idealization of a new master. But his inner sense of freedom eventually makes their close relationship and Buck's continued service to Thornton impossible.[61] Buck avoids confronting this by staying away from Thornton for longer periods of time, meeting the wolf pack and hunting with them. Perhaps this tension is what leads to the perverse tests of love Thornton inflicts on Buck. Buck defends his master from

a desperado and saves his life. Thornton demands Buck jump off a cliff, then places a huge bet on Buck pulling a very heavy sled. That London says Buck "earned" the $1,600 for his master is, as Auerbach notes, "a bit troubling," pointing to the delusion of thinking that a slave will ever be anything more than a thing to his master. But with Thornton and his party, who toil "like giants . . . , days flashing on the heels of days like dreams as they heaped the treasure up," Buck works for even greater riches for his master. In this, says Auerbach, he has not yet "lost touch with civilization."[62] Thornton, the love of Buck's life, must be killed off in order for Buck to be fully realized, because Buck must shed the remnants of his internal image as a slave in order to be free, no matter what Thornton does or doesn't do for him.

In the final chapter of *The Call of the Wild* Buck vacillates between his newfound identity as "a thing of the wild, come in from the wild to sit by John Thornton's fire" (210) and Thornton's companion. With his new wolf brothers Buck hunts and kills, culminating in the death struggle of the great moose. When he returns after many weeks to camp, he finds the Yeehats celebrating their massacre and robbery of Thornton and his dogs, and he retaliates as "the Fiend incarnate": "At times, when he paused to contemplate the carcasses of the Yeehats, he forgot the pain of [Thornton's death]; and at such times he was aware of a great pride in himself,—a pride greater than any he had yet experienced. He had killed man, the noblest game of all, and he had killed in the face of the law of club and fang" (223). This passage marks Buck's final escape from slavery, paradoxically the most grievous and most liberating event of his life, the death of his "father," echoing London's conflicted psychological search for a father in the Klondike fiction. London solves the impasse of Buck's ambivalence about allegiance to Thornton and his desire for freedom by having a third party do in the master, a racially "inferior" third party, interestingly enough, who in their legends of the Ghost Dog come closer to understanding Buck than any master.

Finally free, Buck occasionally makes solitary visits to Thornton's ruined camp, but he is "not always alone." He is fully realized as an individual within the community of the pack: "When the long winter nights come on and the wolves follow their meat into the lower valleys, he may be seen running at the head of the pack through the pale moonlight or glimmering borealis, leaping gigantic above his fellows, his great throat a-bellow as he sings a song of the younger world, which is the song of the pack" (231). We recall Foster's definition of the fourth phase of the slave narrative, that of freedom obtained.

Thornton could no longer be God, nor could any human master, but only the just if harshly impartial god of naturalism Tavernier-Courbin describes. Buck has found no less than his place in nature, which transcends the operations of human beings. Slavery to this god is not slavery but obedience to one's life force. This god does not distinguish among dogs or men or any living things—all are equal at last.

When asked in 1949 whether he would prefer to return to slavery or remain a free man, a former slave, Fountain Hughes, born in 1848 in Charlottesville, Virginia, and reaching adulthood during the Civil War, replied:

> Me? Which I'd rather be? You know what I'd rather do? If I thought, had any idea, that I'd ever be a slave again, I'd take a gun an' jus' end it all right away. Because you're nothing but a dog. You're not a thing but a dog.[65]

Perhaps this sums up more than anything else London's choice of Buck as protagonist in his great slave narrative. No longer dog, Buck becomes a wolf, crossing forever the boundary between himself and mankind, finding the home in which he truly belongs. Unlike Frona, who seems to be free at the conclusion of *A Daughter of the Snows* but is still firmly attached to her father, Buck has found a home in which individual freedom can coexist with the community and its needs. Readers don't really care much about where Frona ends up, but generations have thrilled to Buck's ultimate discovery of identity.

THREE

Marching with the Censor

Jack London, Author! and the Japanese Army

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At the age of twenty-seven, enjoying worldwide fame as author of *The Call of the Wild* and having finished *The Sea-Wolf* (1904), leaving his page proofs in the hands of his old friend George Sterling and his new love Charmian Kittredge, London accepted an offer from the Hearst newspaper syndicate to cover the Russo-Japanese War. In that capacity he could again seek adventure and discover new identities and artistic material. In going to Korea he said he was "expecting to get thrills," inspired by Stephen Crane's "descriptions of being under fire in Cuba" and other tales of "correspondents in all sorts of battles and skirmishes, right in the thick of it, where life was keen and immortal moments were being lived."[1] Such moments were rare for London on the Korean assignment, yet though disappointing to him personally and professionally, it had a lasting impact on his work. On the one hand, London's indignation at his treatment by the Japanese fed his anti-Asian prejudices from the oyster-pirating and Fish Patrol days, but, on the other, his being subjected to "racial" judgment himself helped inspire his interest in the oppressed lives of Japanese regulars and Korean refugees, capturing unique insights into Asian Others in his war correspondence, photography, and fiction, despite his preexisting "intellectual" racialist views. It was in Korea that London personally learned that his white race was one among others and that it was not "superior" at all. Korea created "double-consciousness" for him when—like the Russians—he as a white man was defeated; the double-consciousness this time his own. For a writer, London's racialized conflict with Japanese censors was a critical moment in his artistic identity-formation. This chapter explores London's competing racial engagements in the Russo-Japanese War correspondence, his essays and stories of Asians, and his later iconic anti-Japanese status in a representative World War II–era film.

When on February 8, 1904, the Japanese navy surprised and sank the Rus-

sian fleet at Port Arthur on the Chinese coast, the Western world took alarm; however, rumors of war had been growing, and so a month earlier, with a few other correspondents, London sailed on the SS *Siberia* from San Francisco to Yokohama, beginning his lengthy, frustrating, and perilous journey to reach the front lines. On the ship he suffered influenza and two broken ankles, but once ashore he visited the bars in Yokohama he recalled from his 1893 *Sophia Sutherland* days. There and in Tokyo he heard that the Japanese army would make a surprise landing in Korea, so he traveled along by train, steamer, small boat, and junk to sail up the Yellow Sea coast of Korea to Chemulpo. Once there he joined the Japanese army as a foreign correspondent, though the Japanese officers did not allow correspondents near the fighting, delaying them with waits for permits and then arresting them if they slipped through anyway. Each time London reached the front the Japanese sent him back to Seoul, where he spent his time investigating the area and its inhabitants, but was frustrated to be sending out dispatches that resembled short stories rather than covering battles. He finally managed to move past Ping Yang (today Pyongyang) and cross the Yalu River with the army into Manchuria, where he witnessed a major battle, scoring a major journalistic coup with his coverage.

Even though London's efforts to reach the front lines made him, according to the editors of his *Letters*, "the leading—and most notorious—correspondent in the Russo-Japanese War," he said he felt "profoundly irritated by the futility of my position in this Army and sheer inability . . . to do decent work. What ever I have done I am ashamed of. The only compensation for these months of irritation is a better comprehension of Asiatic geography and Asiatic character."[2] London, however, underestimated the value of what he wrote—whether of war or human interest—as well as the scores of photographs he made, and of what "a better comprehension" of the "Asiatic mind" could lead to. Because he could not see many of the grand movements of men and beasts on the battlefield, he looked around him at the villagers of Korea and common Japanese foot soldiers as they readied for war. The portraits he rendered in dispatches, letters, and photographs are true "human documents," as London used the term, comparable to his written and photographic descriptions of British workers in *The People of the Abyss* less than a year earlier.[3] In Korea London's developing understanding of his identity as a writer was once again constructed against race: despite his sense of connection with his subjects, for newspaper readers at home he was simply Our Man in the Orient.[4]

The California London left when he went to Korea saw socialists joined

with various white workingmen's groups to persecute Asian "aliens" and exclude them from citizenship. The Boxer Rebellion of 1900 intensified anti-Asian sentiment, while the 1901 assassination of President William McKinley reignited general fears of foreign anarchists and antiradical nativism. Immigration laws of 1903, 1905, and 1907 added restrictions to those enacted in the 1880s, such as the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. According to John Higham, during and after the war anti-Japanese sentiment "burst forth in a raging flood. . . . Alive with hysteria, the California legislature unanimously called for Japanese exclusion, boycotts of Japanese businesses began, and the San Francisco School Board ordered the segregation of Asiatic pupils." West Coast business interests had looked for an imperialist adventure in the Asia in which they would prosper, but instead they got Port Arthur: "As a result the West Coast felt a double sense of crisis: added to an internal fear of Japanese blood was an external fear of Japanese power. One exacerbated the other," observes Higham.[5] As workingmen in California perceived a conspiracy between the capitalist "kings" and the nonwhite foreigners who slaved for them, racist diatribes frequently appeared in socialist journals such as *Organized Labor*.[6]

Socialists heard statements such as those in a 1905 speech made by Samuel Gompers in St. Paul, Minnesota: "Caucasians are not going to let their standard of living be destroyed by negroes, Chinamen, Japs, or any others." Although London's socialism accommodated racialism, rejecting international brotherhood remained an intellectual position at odds with his "temperament and desire to will his own destiny," according to Carolyn Johnston.[7] His essay "The Social Revolution" (1908) supports Japanese socialists imprisoned for their beliefs, yet in "The Question of the Maximum," "What Communities Lose by the Competitive System," and "Wanted: A New Law of Development" he awkwardly tries to reconcile socialism and social Darwinism.[8] London also published a *San Francisco Examiner* story November 10, 1904, "BIG SOCIALIST VOTE IS FRAUGHT WITH MEANING, Great Socialist Vote Explained by Jack London," in which he offers a "greeting to the Socialists of Russia" from the "Socialists of Japan," which reads, "Dear comrades, your government and ours have recently plunged into war to carry out their imperialistic tendencies, but for us as Socialists there are no boundaries, races, country, or nationality. We are comrades, brothers and sisters, and have no reason to fight. Your enemies are not the Japanese people, but our militarism and so-called patriotism."[9] London chose this moment to use his new international fame to take an extraordinary position, as though he could speak for comrades in Japan, while

also addressing the same in Russia. Some of his socialist friends were upset that he supported the Russian side in the war because if the czar's army failed in it, the way would be paved for a socialist revolution in Russia (this is in fact did happen in 1905). Yet whatever the international situation, Johnston emphasizes that London's determination to win at the "writing game," with or without socialism's party line, was never in question. He enjoyed the attention he received for his daring war correspondence just as he did for his anticapitalist speeches. He was clear, however, about what came first; for example, he sympathized with the International Workers of the World union but worried that close association with it would lower sales of his books: "London justified this stance on the basis that he was above all a writer whose words could be armies in themselves."[10]

Asians may have been the target of opposition back home, but in Korea London found the tables turned. He left Korea in June of 1904 after being held for court-martial by the Japanese. Seeing himself as the eyes and ears of the world, as international citizen and writer, he learned that the Japanese army saw him as merely a nuisance. At precisely the time in his career when he was evolving a mature conception of himself as a writer, he discovered that the Japanese military caste regarded him and all correspondents as underlings. In an interview published July 1, 1904, in the *Examiner* upon his return, he complained, "The Japanese does not in the least understand the correspondent or the mental processes of the correspondent, which are a white man's mental processes. The Japanese is of a military race. His old caste distinctions placed the fighting man at the top; next comes the peasant; after that the merchant, and beneath all the scribe." In short, "A correspondent from the West is a man who must be informed by printed instructions that he must dress and behave decently. The Japanese cannot understand straight talk, white man's talk" (*Reports*, 125). In statements such as this London racialized his role as a U.S. writer as that of a white man, while his comments on "caste" highlight deeper issues at play. London's access to "whiteness" was both an evocation of racial superiority and, ironically, an attempt to transcend "race"—that is, as a white man, he could feel superior to the Japanese officers who defined him as racially inferior.

London's Euro-American contemporaries were content for the most part merely to view Asians and all nonwhite peoples as inferior and corrupt. In London's Russo-Japanese War correspondence, however, as in his Klondike fiction, there are powerful competing impulses about race. Angry at the Japanese

officers as he was, London also respected and admired their qualities, though he knew he did not understand them. He believed the Japanese government posed to the West a threat—and not an "inferior" one. This fact separates him from most observers of his day and afterward, and he also articulates many of the concerns Americans at large refused to confront. Though London still hoped socialism would one day replace all such struggles, in the meantime, he thought the United States should ensure its national future, and he further recognized that such a strategy resembled those the Japanese leaders were using to justify their war with Russia.

The key to London's view of the Japanese does not lie primarily in international politics, however, but in his position as an artist. For example, on February 1, 1904, when he was arrested in Moji, Japan, for taking photographs of laborers and children in what he only later realized was a restricted area, the situation was allayed when Japanese journalists (whom he called "brothers in craft") banded together to persuade the authorities to release him and return his camera to him.[11] London's camaraderie with them was an index of how the profession of writer overcame barriers and provided shared identity. Yet his rejection by the Japanese authorities rankled, nor would he forget the Moji incident. There was much at stake. The way out of the lower class for London—and the way to speak for that same class worldwide—was to be a writer, but Japan seemed to stand as a racial barrier to that dream.

THE CORRESPONDENT AS WHITE MAN

The nineteen-month Russo-Japanese War is not well-remembered today, but its repercussions were felt long after its September 1905 conclusion. Japan had defeated China in 1895, but France and Germany helped Russia pressure Japan into accepting only an indemnity instead of territory. Czar Nicholas II of Russia borrowed money from France for this and also to finish the Siberian railway eastward, which would open up badly needed trade routes. The terminus of the railway was to be located in Port Arthur (now Lüshun), a southern port of Manchuria, as Russia needed a warmer-water port. Russia occupied Manchuria to protect its railway all the way to the Yalu River, the border with Korea. The imperialist ambitions of both Russia and Japan were focused on Korea, and each secretly built up arms. The United States and Great Britain lent financial and diplomatic support to the Japanese. Russians and Germans sought to "pacify" the Chinese, and the Chinese appealed to Japan to "save" it

from the Russians. In Russia, the political situation mushroomed into revolt. A war with the "heathen" Japanese was seen by the czar's advisors as an ideal distraction, and Russians in general believed their military would demolish the small country. They did not dream Japan would make the first move, but they did, breaking off relations and then invading Russia at Port Arthur. Although this defeat was not ultimately decisive militarily, it was major news around the world, also in Russia, where it helped ignite the 1905 Russian revolution. Though early in the war the U.S. position was pro-Japanese and anti-Russian, by the end of the war Americans had turned anti-Japanese due, among other things, to diplomacy by the Russians and the hatred against Asians in the West; the postwar U.S. attitude thus resembled the anti-Asian panic of the 1880s and 1890s. Thus the Russo-Japanese War was a racial war of many complexities, beginning with U.S. and British support for an Asian nation against a white one, then resulting in severe anti-Japanese feeling in the States and in Europe at its conclusion.

Even in his earliest dispatches London clearly has race on his mind. At one point, detained at Ping Yang, London wrote to Charmian, "How the letters have roused me up! Furthermore, they have proved to me, or rather, reassured me, that I am a white man." He goes on to describe the forlorn village of Poval Colli, in which he is being held, its people "scared to death." He reports, "We storm the village—force our way into the stables—capture 25 lbs. Barley hidden in man's trousers—and so forth and so forth, for two mortal hours—chatter and chin-chin to drive one mad. And this is but one of the days. One can scarce think whiteman's thoughts, as I write this, the horses are breaking loose in the stable—native horses are fiends, and I have desisted writing long enough to rouse up the mapus" (*Letters*, 416). Despite his low status with the Japanese, note the "we" who storm the village and, more importantly, London's position over the Koreans whom he will "rouse up" as "mapus" (Korean grooms). His race and class positions are ambiguous, and though he is on the "winning" side, he says he cannot think—that is, write—"whiteman's" thoughts (*Letters*, 427). At such a moment, his vocation, his identity, and his class uneasily coexisted in the no-man's-land of a foreign war. His lowly status in Korea threatened to undo all that he had managed to build, for, as Howard Lachtman emphasizes, London above all "cherished the consolation of his craft," which gives a writer "the liberty to do so with his life as he sees fit."[12] As his marriage with Bessie was breaking up and he faced the decision to abandon his busy city life with his friends to move to the country with Charmian,

away from the sociable world he had known and enjoyed in Oakland and San Francisco, it would take a great deal of success—personally, in his new love relationship, and professionally, in the development of his writing—to undo the Japanese officers' challenges to his childhood myth of succeeding as an "Anglo-Saxon" and his ambitions as an important author.

London's emerging identity had everything to do with fame, as only the new mass-market publishing technologies could make possible. With the Hearst papers leading the way, front-page newspaper layouts became larger, more dramatic, with oversize photographs across the front page. London was the perfect material for such drama, given his adventures, his colorful writing, and his startling photographs. His dispatches from the war were accompanied by line art and sidebars sketching him at work with his camera. Announcing his affiliation as their war correspondent to Korea, the *San Francisco Examiner* ran gigantic studio portraits of him and a biography of his earlier adventures on its front page on January 7, 1904. His photos and stories appeared for months in many papers in full-page art layouts complete with cartoons. His Korean photos most often ran across the full horizontal space above the fold of the newspaper. On April 4 the *Examiner* headline reads, "STRAIGHT FROM THE SEAT OF WAR: Glimpses of the Japanese Army." On February 7, 1904, the *New York American* ran a front-page story headlined "JACK LONDON FREE! HE WAS NOT A SPY!" after the Moji arrest. The front-page banner headline of the March 3, 1904, *Chicago Examiner* shouted "KOREANS FLEE IN TERROR FROM RUSSIANS," and London's byline is followed by subtitles, such as "Famous Author Tells of Daring Advance of Cossacks on Anju and Failure of Japanese to Try to Check Their Onward March" and "Foremost of America's Younger Writers, Author of 'A Daughter of the Snows,' 'Children of the Abyss' [sic], 'Kempton-Wace Letters,' 'The Call of the Wild,' 'The Son of the Wolf,' 'The Sea-Wolf,' and other stories,'" and more, before it gets to the actual dispatch. This serves to remind us just how important was London's position in the newspapers as an author representing his country.[13] Even after his return home he continued to be celebrated, as in Robert L. Dunn's story in the *Examiner* of June 26: "JACK LONDON KNOWS NOT FEAR."[14]

His first Korean dispatches begin in Chemulpo (present-day Inchon, South Korea) on February 26, 1904, and continue from Ping Yang and Seoul in early March, then from the two-week trip from Ping Yang toward Sunan, where he was again detained before being sent back to Seoul at the end of March. He departed Seoul again to Wiju (modern-day Ŭiju, North Korea) in late April.

Then, from Antung (now Dandong), across the Yalu River in Manchuria, he witnessed the Battle of the Yalu River in the first week of May. He was soon after arrested for striking a *mapu* for stealing from him; to avoid a Japanese court-martial, Richard Harding Davis cabled President Roosevelt to ask him to intervene. Whether he was expelled from or left Korea voluntarily, in mid-June London returned home to California via Yokohama, arriving July 1.[15] His biggest story, only then being published, was dated June 4: "JACK LONDON'S GRAPHIC STORY OF THE JAPS DRIVING RUSSIANS ACROSS THE YALU RIVER, First Pen Picture Presented by Any Correspondent Eyewitness of the Remarkable Bravery and Skillful Tactics of the Victorious Japanese Army at Antung." But another big battle lay ahead at home; he learned on the trip home that Bessie had filed for separation and maintenance, but not a divorce petition, denying him his "freedom," as he wrote to Charmian on July 6, 1904, when he arrived in Oakland. He told Charmian, "The fight is on" (*Letters*, 431).

The newspaper hype aside, reading London's Korean dispatches and letters is an exercise in appreciating his keen eye for detail and moreover his ability to place the immediate human scene within historical and cultural frameworks. Though rare, his battlefield narrative is excellent, but the bulk of his Korean writing is composed of portraits of common soldiers and peasants caught in the maelstrom of war. His compassion for these subjects emerges as it did in *The People of the Abyss*; the false note is sounded when he tries to analyze "the Japanese character" or "the Asiatic." Earlier, I noted a continuum of race from London's nonfiction through novels to short fiction. His Russo-Japanese war correspondence—where he was constructing his mature artistic self—is important as a transitional discourse because it occupies the position of dramatic nonfiction, mediating nonfiction's abstractions with the individual characters of short stories.

London's language is polished and effective while maintaining an easy, journalistic, personal tone that conceals the careful structuring of each dispatch. He effectively employs dialogue and dramatic scenes. As in much of his work, he is intensely interested in problems of language and communication, and like a fictional narrator he attempts to connect emotionally with his "characters." He records the details that support everyday life in the field: handling horses, how wagons are loaded, how soldiers' packs are assembled, how food is obtained from villagers. As in *The People of the Abyss* he does a lot of accounting: how many pounds of rice are necessary, how many carriers. He moves

from a minute description of a soldier's kit to the panorama of wagon trains across the war-torn landscape, placing that one soldier with his gear within the larger picture.

The people London observes stay with the reader: Korean peasants displaced by the war trudge with families and belongings down frozen roads, less terrified than resigned to terror. Common soldiers of the Japanese forces limp stoically under heavy packs under the direction of their imperious commanders on horseback. Army surgeons try to save the injured feet of soldiers. He often invents characters as if the dispatches were short stories, and the urge to invent characters—that we may experience emotional connection with them—is nearly always stronger than any of his drives toward ideology or abstraction: "And the troops stream by, the horses fight—*mapus*, cook, and interpreter are squabbling 4 feet away from me. And the frost is in the air. I must close my doors and light my candles. A Korean family of refugees—their household goods on their backs, just went by," he writes (*Letters*, 418). London needs to paint a scene for his readers back home, partly because, contrary to their expectations for a battlefield reporter, he sees part of his role as establishing a sense of kinship with other human beings caught up in a human disaster: "The road was crowded with cavalry, infantry and stores. Pack trains and huge bullock carts plodded along, and long lines of coolies, clad in white sweeping garments and burdened with rice, toiled through the slush and mud. On the left cheek of each coolie a scarlet or purple smear of paint advertised his employ with the Japanese army transport. Possibly the strangest feature was the incongruous white garments worn by these coolies, and, for that matter, by all Koreans. The effect was like so much ice drifting on the surface of a black river" (*Reports*, 43–44). The coolies are dehumanized by the smear of paint—and like so much "ice drifting"—but then humanized by a narrative point of view that notices it. One of London's most effective techniques is to zoom in on an individual. In his description of the road to Wiju near the Yalu River just before the big battle there, he tells of squads of cavalry, baggage trains, parties of the Red Cross outfit, "bunches of pioneers drifting along and repairing the road, men of the telegraph corps at work on the military wires, coolies, bullock carts, pack bullocks, trains of the little indomitable Korean ponies, tiny braying jackasses, squealing horses—and down through it all a lone Chinese from Manchuria, looking neither to the right nor left, but heading southward with incurious eyes and expressionless face for a land where

peace still smiled" (*Reports*, 94). This dispatch was one of his only real news scoops, and it is significant that within it he chooses to expend column inches on this one, lost man.

London would probably not have dwelled on such human-interest details had he had the opportunity to report more battles, but he probably would not have removed much of this human document perspective from his reports altogether. Following the battle at the Yalu River, having witnessed the terrible casualties on both sides, London finds himself peering into a window of a Chinese home in the village of Kuel-ian-ching on the way back to his camp. He joins a knot of Japanese soldiers who are looking in at a group of white men held captive—he feels a start as he realizes he is "outside in freedom among aliens." Then, down the road, he describes the sight of a cart: "It was the gray end of day, and the cart was burdened with gray—gray blankets, gray jackets, gray overcoats. On either side, from amid this mound of gray, bristled the fixed bayonets of Russian rifles. On top of the mound of gray was a head of hair like my own and a white forehead. The rest of the face was covered. But from the rear projected a naked foot and leg. It was the leg of a man who must have stood over six feet, and it was white. It moved up and down with the joggling of the two-wheeled cart, beating ceaseless and monotonous time as it drew away in the distance." A Japanese man in civilian clothes stops London: "'Your people did not think we could beat the white. We have now beaten the white.' The word 'white' was his own, as the thought was his own, and as he spoke leaped into my eyes a vision of the white foot beating time on the Pekin cart" ("Give Battle to Retard Enemy," Antung [Manchuria], May 1, 1904; *Reports*, 106–07).

This passage and its shades of gray close this narrative of the battle, and while on the one hand it fans the flames of anti-Japanese sentiment it also reveals more complex attitudes. An earlier dispatch, "The Sufferings of the Japanese" (*Reports*, 75–82), describes a visit to the surgeon's tent and focuses on the terrible state of the Japanese soldiers' feet in the course of the endless marching. In the later dispatch the dead Russian's foot also receives his notice and sympathy, "outside" with the Japanese but "inside" with the defeated whites. He entertains varying views of the feet of the soldiers, as signs of oppression or victory, for as a writer's his is a privileged and highly flexible point of view reinforced by his being an alien (white) within his environment at the same time that he escapes the fate of the other whites (Russians) by virtue of being a correspondent. London's tenuous racialized position begins to feel

more like that of a self-conscious narrator foregrounded in a short story or novel, both shaping his tale and being shaped by it.[16] This would be the same "gray" position he would occupy on the voyage of the *Snark*, both within and without its "houses" of identification.

London puzzles over his inability to narrate the Japanese mind, though the Japanese are never out of his thoughts. He begins by praising them: "I think as to the quietness, strictness and orderliness of Japanese soldiers it is very hard to find any equals in the world." He notes how, unlike Western soldiers, including Americans, they never "kick up a row" in a town they occupy; they are never drunk or violent: they keep things orderly and treat all citizens of a Korean town well. The Koreans asked themselves: if the soldiers were Russian, what might have happened? As to their military training, their infantry excels any in the world, for "Japanese is the race who can produce real fighting men" (*Letters*, 415). Also "They are deadly serious" (*Reports*, 41–42). He fears the Japanese because he does not know them, nor they him, due to a mutual inability to understand the other's language. The fear of course is that such "inscrutables" may be one's superiors.

Another telling episode reveals London's unstable position as a narrator. He concludes a discussion of the racial attributes of the Japanese and Koreans with a detailed picture of one Japanese cavalryman's poor treatment of his horse: "The Asiatic is heartless. The suffering of dumb brutes means nothing to him." As proof, he relates the following story:

> The day was bitter cold. A cruel north wind was blowing and the spattering mud froze wherever it struck. Jones and I had overtaken and were passing a troop of cavalry. The curious nervousness and excitement of a horse attracted our attention.
>
> Mud to the weight of fully twenty pounds had frozen in a solid lump to the end of his sweeping tail. Had the tail been tied up in the first place this would not have happened. As it was, at every step the twenty-weight of mud swung forward between its hind legs, striking the legs on the shinbones. As a result the horse lifted its feet high in order to try and step over the object which administered the blow. It was walking over its own tail, frantic with fear.
>
> We told the man to tie it up or to cut it off, and for the latter purpose offered a large and sharp-bladed knife. But he smiled commiseratingly at us for our anxiety and solicitude and for what he probably termed arrant idiocy, and rode on, the frozen mud, the size of a workman's dinner pail, banging the horse's shin-

> bones at every step and the horse vainly trying to step over it. The man was only a common soldier after all, but where was the officer? (*Reports*, 46–47)

Here the horse is the oppressed, and London is the outraged observer of cruelty (and an imagined stand-in). He cannot understand the Japanese soldier's behavior, and the Japanese soldier cannot understand his. London says "We told the man to tie it up," as if giving orders, but the dinner pail he mentions is a telling reference to his real position: London's class identification is in that dinner pail, and so is his vocation. The last sentence of the quotation also speaks to London's assumption about the chasm between foot soldiers and officers. If neither a Japanese soldier nor his officer will respond to the ethical problem of the horse as London wishes, then how can the Japanese army "appropriately" respond to upwardly mobile London the writer (and arbiter of race and culture)?

London's narration of the Japanese frontal attack at the Yalu River is a magnification of the horse incident. He criticizes the Japanese handling of the crossing, with its suicidal losses:

> Certain I am that no European or American commander would have ordered this attack when the crossing to the right was open and uncontested. But the Japanese are Asiatics, and the Asiatic does not value life as we do. The generals of Japan have no press of populace at home to harp on the cost of victory, splendid victory, and never mind the cost. . . . The prestige of Japan had appreciated all over the world because of the remarkable successes for her navy at Port Arthur. And yet the world wagged her head dubiously and said: "Wait till we see what Japan does on land." Perhaps it was to settle this doubt. . . . The Japanese . . . have been very fiery to prove themselves fit from the white man's point of view by facing white men. (*Reports*, 105–07)

Despite all his rhetoric about not understanding the alien mind, London narrates a perfectly plausible rationale for the Japanese army's actions. His analysis contradicts his protestations about the impenetrable Asian mind. When he is acting as a reporter London "exposes" the Japanese army's strategy, as if, despite their censorship, they will have to answer to him and to the international press. Again the role of the writer (as journalist) is foregrounded. Yet his astuteness is compromised by his startling naïveté concerning war. He is writing only ten years before the atrocities of World War I and a few years after the bloody charge at San Juan Hill during the Spanish-American War.

Human beings of whatever color, he knows perfectly well, are capable of atrocities on a grand scale, especially when they are battling other "races." Throughout this scene, London as narrator moves uncomfortably among positions of knowing and not knowing the situation, presuming and not presuming the enemy's mind, employing and avoiding interpretation. This scene epitomizes his vexed position.

ASIANS IN LONDON'S SHORT FICTION AND ESSAYS

Three years after writing his last Russo-Japanese War correspondence, London satirized the West's paranoia about Asians and lack of understanding them in his story "The Unparalleled Invasion" (1907), in which modern Western powers conspire to destroy China with germ warfare and afterward vow never to use it on each other—one of his most pointedly ironic endings. The story contains the typical rhetoric of the time. Western leaders fear that "There were two Chinese for every white-skinned human in the world. . . . There was no way to damn up the over-spilling, monstrous flood of life" (*Stories*, 1240–41). The world "shivers" at the ever-growing numbers of Chinese. But the story ironically exposes such cant, with the focus ultimately on the Western world's murderousness and the sad defects of human character in general. Euro-American powers bent upon world domination show no sign of humanity in their dealings with China.[17] The West feels it can destroy the East because the two have nothing in common and are in direct competition:

> [T]here *was no common psychological speech.* Their thought-processes were radically dissimilar. There was no intimate vocabulary. The Western mind penetrated the Chinese mind but a short distance when it found itself in a fathomless maze. The Chinese mind penetrated the Western mind an equally short distance when it fetched up against a blank, incomprehensible wall. It was all a matter of language. . . . The fabrics of their minds were woven from totally different stuffs. They were mental aliens. (*Stories*, 1234–35)

In London's best work we find such subtle explorations of racial lack of understanding and the global disasters that can follow such rejections of the Other, as in "Goliah," "Shin Bones," "A Goboto Night," and "The Pearls of Parlay."[18]

London's essays on Asia fail to mirror the flexibility of his short stories and only barely echo the equivocations of the Korean correspondence, but they relativize race more than most scholars acknowledge. "The Yellow Peril," be-

gun in Manchuria during his last days in Korea, was published September 25, 1904, in the *Examiner*; one of his most racially charged writings, it is often cited as evidence of London's bigotry. But London was deliberately writing sensationally: he wanted to startle the public and to situate himself as someone knowledgeable enough to warn Americans about what they did not imagine. He argues in "The Yellow Peril" that though they are "a race of mastery and power," the Japanese will only achieve dominance through use of technology "the Caucasian mind has devised." They are thus imitators of the West, "but only in things material. Things spiritual cannot be imitated . . . and here the Japanese fails." Yet appearing to contradict this, London also recognizes that though the racial difference is essential, the Japanese believe in it as well, as evidenced both in their antagonism toward the West and in their growing mastery over the Chinese and Koreans. But the Japanese, he says, will not ultimately be the threat to the West, unless Japan "manages" China; he predicts the Japanese invasion of China (which occurred in 1925).

Though it would have been difficult for most Americans to identify with the Japanese, in some important ways London did just that. As noted above, he and the Japanese officers in Korea seemed to share the idea that a superior race had every right to succeed. He was unhappy at the Japanese success, but he did not belittle it. Some Americans saw the potential of the Japanese, calling them the "Yankees of the East," but few understood Japanese empire building. The irony is plain: the United States was clearly the empire Japan sought to be, but on both sides racism obscured the similarity of purpose that Japanese and Americans shared. Thus when he warns complacent Americans not to undervalue the strengths of the Japanese, London's first-hand knowledge of the Other trumps his belief in theories of Anglo-Saxon destiny.[19]

Five years later, the heat of his resentment of the Japanese having cooled, London wrote another essay on Asia, "If Japan Wakens China," published in *Sunset Magazine* in December 1909. Though it opens with much of the alarmist tone of "The Yellow Peril," it equivocates more, attempting to show both "sides." He again quotes the woman he refers to in "The Yellow Peril" who said Japanese people have no souls: "In this she was wrong," he says:

> The Japanese are just as much possessed of soul as she and the rest of her race. And far be it from me to infer that the Japanese soul is in the smallest way inferior to the Western soul. It may even be superior. You see, we do not know the Japanese soul, and what its value may be in the scheme of things. And yet that

> American lady's remark but emphasizes the point. So different was the Japanese soul from hers, so unutterably alien, so absolutely without any sort of kinship or means of communication, that to her there was no slightest sign of its existence. (*Reports*, 360)

What separates the two essays are emotional distance from Japan, some historicizing, five years of a successful career as a fiction writer, and, perhaps most importantly, the cruise of the *Snark* through the South Seas, which immeasurably deepened London's sense of the complexities of the many Pacific Rim peoples.[20]

WORLD WAR II JACK LONDON

Three decades after London's death, the subtleties in London's Russo-Japanese War writings were lost when his image was reconstructed as an anti-Japanese icon during World War II. If his Russo-Japanese war correspondence showed a growing tendency to question and relativize racial categories, in contrast, the way London was often portrayed in popular culture afterward was at odds with the nuances of his Korean dispatches. His whiteness continued to be a defining quality of his image. A particularly egregious example occurs in Samuel Bronston's 1943 film *Jack London*, based loosely on Charmian's 1921 biography of her husband and starring Michael O'Shea, Virginia Mayo, and Susan Hayward. This is a propagandistic film that collapses London's life almost entirely into the months he spent in Korea and uses him as an icon of white American manhood against stereotypical representations of Japanese characters. As if to announce its highly specific, wartime goal of generating support and funds for the war, the film is framed by actual newsreel shots of the Liberty Ship *Jack London* being launched at Sausalito; Charmian in furs and large hat is shown breaking the champagne bottle. If at the turn of the century his public needed him to present Others in his fiction and to act as hero in confronting them, then that heroic role as artist was enlarged by 1943, when he is the subject of the film. Evidently Charmian had great hopes for this production and considered the film her contribution to the war effort, but when she attended the premiere, as she testily wrote in her diary, she "Walked out."[21] The film contains numerous inaccuracies—it has London married to Charmian when he was in Korea; it minimizes his socialist works; and it concocts a huge Edwardian mansion as Jack and Charmian's residence in 1900, when the call comes to cover

the Boer War (which in the film happens two years earlier than in reality). But for a presumed biographical film it leaves out nearly all of the rest of his life. The film does, however, provide insight into what the U.S. 1940s wartime audience needed from Jack London as a white man. As Tony Williams summarizes, in the film the "Jack" character escapes "degrading industrial work" to a life of adventure and then to his calling as a writer. As a "one-dimensional portrayal" required by wartime sensibility, he then is presented as prophesying the growing Japanese militarism that would result in Pearl Harbor. The film is interested not in Jack London the artist but only in his utilization for the wartime economy; Williams sees "Jack" as disposable as a Liberty Ship. The London character's face is shown in shadow at the end—a Hollywood means of disposing of a character—then he and Charmian are superimposed over the ship that launched the movie, then faded out. Charmian is cast as the girl back home, separated from her husband by the war: "Their romance is a series of interruptions," with her husband constantly called away for "duty."[22]

Earlier, as an oyster pirate, "Jack" and his pals are "us" against the unjust police in a sort of class war; he also defends sick factory workers. Even earlier, with a Virginia Prentiss character, he speaks pointedly about how "people like us" work hard and receive little in return; the scene uses the bond between London and Prentiss to solidify the film's American-versus-Asian angle but complicates its racism, raising class solidarity over racism at home. In his college classroom "Jack" tells the uninterested professor he wants to write about "poverty and cruelty" so we can figure out how to end them, and later in the film he preaches against a "century of tyrants" and the rule of money. But the film makes it clear that something essential to being a writer is still missing. "Jack" does not catch fire until he confronts the Japanese directly; the missing ingredient for this celluloid crusader is racial awareness.

The Japanese characters in the film are stock Hollywood depictions of the Japanese in World War II played by white actors made up to appear Asian; only one character was mentioned in London's writing—General Fuji, the chief of staff for the commanding General Kuroki, who ordered London held for court-martial in Japan. A figure with squinting eyes behind thick round glasses, mustache, and buck teeth, caricaturing a Japanese man, appeared in U.S. World War II–era films, as he does as "Hiroshi," a government minister, in Bronston's *Jack London*. "Jack" calls Hiroshi "a sawed-off runt." Hiroshi represents the enemy diminished and thus not feared; film audiences would see the character as merely sneaky, ruthless, and conniving, defeated by Ameri-

can moral idealism and, eventually, by Americans' superiority. In the film, Mr. Hiroshi is cowardly because he violates "Jack's" cardinal principle, sincerity. He says to the assembled correspondents at his press conference: "Sometimes not practical for world to know what is going on." Displaying his badge of honesty (and whiteness), "Jack" retorts that if the world had known what was going on, it would never have allowed the Japanese to deliver their "sneak punch" to Port Arthur.[23]

When "Jack" returns to the United States as a prophet of the Yellow Peril, his newspaper publisher—an American counterpart of Mr. Hiroshi—won't listen to him about the "Japanese Peril, the Brown Beast, and the Asiatic Dream." He cynically favors trade with Japan instead, distinguishing "Jack" more clearly as perhaps an enemy of capitalistic America. "Jack" recognizes that the greedy publisher cares only about Japan's "little brown customers," to whom the publisher refers as "sawed-off runts in a papier-mâché island." With its plans to make a profit from Japan, the East Coast–controlled upper class is blind to the danger represented by Japan, "Jack" believes. As a cinematic celebration of the "regular" American, the film argues that to be Western and lower class is to be more racially and nationalistically aware than the bourgeois class.

If the real London was converted from racism in his character portrayals of racial Others in his writings, the opposite happens in this movie. In the film "Jack" is more or less diffident about the Japanese until a discussion with Captain Tanaka reveals the civil militarist's mad scheme to take over the world. As "Jack" is converted, so too the movie viewer is supposed to be converted to hatred of the Japanese. Tanaka reveals to "Jack" Japan's imperial mission to conquer China and defeat Western powers in its bid to crush opposition to its goal of dominating the world, a vision that sickens the hero. As Tanaka puts it: "the rising sun has its destiny; the play is on; the curtain is going up on a Japanese world."[24] This scene (along with another that is equally fictional—"Jack" sees Russian soldiers summarily executed in a prison camp) makes "Jack" hate the Japanese, but it also raises an interesting point the filmmakers did not anticipate: how different is the tone of Tanaka's speech from that of the discourse of Manifest Destiny of the United States during London's time? How would it compare with beliefs about Anglo-Saxon superiority to which London and his contemporaries subscribed? As the United States defeated Spain in Cuba, annexed the Philippines, and carried on imperialist adventures elsewhere, in 1904 the curtain was really going up on an *American* world.

The Bronston film was one of many made during the war years to fuel the

American appetite for winning and to construct a clear Us and Them division. Director Frank Capra was employed by the U.S. Army to make films to show soldiers and civilians. Because it was hard to interest viewers in propaganda about democracy in the abstract or with pictures of U.S. ships sailing out to sea, he assembled films that used footage of enemy propaganda, shots of Axis leaders displaying their scorn for American values, calling upon their people to destroy America, and trampling upon symbols of America, a terrific shock for American audiences. In his films *Why We Fight* and *Prelude to War*, Capra shot his own footage to blend with Axis footage to contrast homey details of American life with the rantings of Mussolini, Hitler, and Hirohito. In a key scene at the conclusion of *Prelude to War*, made just one year before Bronston's film, two books symbolically appear on top of a heap of burning American books, presumably books that would be burned if the enemy were to win and reach the American shores: *A Farewell to Arms* and *Martin Eden*.[25] Such later positionings as an American icon of heroism ironically diminish London's real contribution to a better understanding of relations between Japan and the West at the turn of the century. Though his image stood for freedom from tyranny in World War II depictions, his troubled interrogations of East and West—along with his struggles to become a writer "against" race, as it were—are a much more compelling set of responses to race and authorial identity.

FOUR

London and the Postcolonial South Pacific

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London and his crew sailed the Londons' ketch, the *Snark*, across the Pacific in 1907–09, two years of adventure and arguably the two most important years of London's artistic production, especially his portrayals of race. The trip occasioned a dramatic change in his racial thinking, as he learned much more about the diverse peoples of the world than his earlier racialist ideas had allowed. Nearly without exception in his Pacific short fiction his racial point of view is not that of the colonizing whites but rather of islanders themselves. From his very first Hawaiian story, "The House of Pride," written in 1907, he directly attacks racism and colonialism as he offers scathing portraits of white masters. The most common racial tropes in the Pacific fiction include colonialization and destruction of indigenous peoples; slavery; white projections onto nonwhite Others; "natives" (and whites) as diseased; whites "crossing the beach" to live with "natives"; problems of passing; racial role reversals; white displacement in "dark" geographies; indigenous resistance; exile and the search for a home. London's racially progressive stories sharply critique the social Darwinist idea of the "inevitable" white man and Western misconceptions about tropical peoples.

Originally planned to span seven years, the voyage was cut short when London and the crew were overcome by tropical diseases after only twenty-one months. From the beginning, when the entire boat nearly went to pieces en route to its first port in Hawai'i, the voyage had not been without challenges. Time and again, when the boat or the crew came up short on ability or knowledge, London came forward with solutions to the problem and to remove the crew from danger. Despite their optimism, the crew was unprepared for the spear and gun battles between islanders and white "blackbirders" or labor "recruiters," evidence of cannibalism, and the rank dissipations of white colonizers they encountered in the southwest Pacific. Tropical diseases in the

vicinity of the Solomon Islands finally did in the hardy group, after all of their voyaging and exploring, trading and observing, evading hurricanes, volcanoes, and treacherous reefs from Hawai'i through Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas; the Paumotus (now Tuamotus); Tahiti, Raiatea, Bora-Bora in the Society Islands; Samoa; Fiji, the New Hebrides (now Vanuatu), and the Solomons.[1]

In the Solomons London suffered malaria, ulcerating lesions produced by yaws, ringworm, Ngari virus (what the islanders called "ngari ngari"), rotting gums, a rectal ulcer, and other fevers and skin infections. London's hands began to swell and the skin to thicken and peel off in layers. When the skin on his arms began to silver, he feared leprosy and the loss of the use of his hands—those writer's and sailor's tools could grasp neither rope nor pencil. In December 1908 London was hospitalized in Sydney for several ailments, including the mysterious peeling and hardening of his hands. He grew so discouraged about a cure that he ascribed his illness to an unstable "nervous equilibrium" (*Letters*, 774). To cure yaws or "Solomon Island sores," an infection of the spirochete *Treponema pertenue*, which eats skin and flesh and sometimes bone, London had dosed himself repeatedly with corrosive sublimate of mercury, as well as his reluctant crew (the mixture caused a painful burn), and by the time they reached Sydney no one knew how much he had used. Current medical thinking now surmises that mercury poisoning helped hasten his death at age forty from kidney failure and stroke, and was also probably responsible for the condition of his hands.[2]

After a lengthy rest in Sydney and the excitement of the Jack Johnson–Tommy Burns world heavyweight fight on December 26, which London covered for the *New York Herald*, the Londons returned to California on a tramp steamer, the *Tymeric*, via Ecuador and Panama, arriving home in July 1909. (From January 13 to February 14, 1908, the Londons had returned to California on business.) Though he and Charmian treasured happy memories of the *Snark* voyage, London was disappointed in his body's failure to meet the challenges of the South Pacific. He found an explanation for why he had been so severely stricken in *The Effects of Tropical Light Upon White Men* (1905) by Dr. Charles Edward Woodruff, a retired surgeon of the Fourth Army Brigade in the Philippines, where he had investigated health problems white men encountered in the tropics; he was also editor of the journal *American Medicine*. Woodruff believed that white skin is vulnerable to the "dangerous actinic or short rays of light which destroy living protoplasm."[3] Woodruff wrote of the different "zoological zones" of races. Like Herbert Spencer he thought hu-

mankind evolved from "one or more anthropoid types" that migrated around the world into the different zoological zones; survivors who adapted to climate passed on their adaptations. Like other scientific racialists such as Benjamin Kidd, also a believer in the dangers of the tropical sun for whites, Woodruff was fascinated with "Aryans," and by his definition only blond, blue-eyed, fair-skinned Nordics were "white." As London has his narrator in *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore (1914) explain, "Major Woodruff's thesis is that the white-skinned, blue-eyed Aryan, born to government and command, ever leaving his primeval, overcast and foggy home, ever commands and governs the rest of the world and ever perishes because of the too-white light he encounters. It is a very tenable hypothesis, and will bear looking into."[4]

Jessica Greening Loudermilk stresses the importance of Woodruff's influence on London beyond merely as a source to explain his skin problems. As she notes, for Woodruff to claim the white man as the natural and destined world ruler and then explain that he cannot exist in any part of the tropical world is contradictory. Thus though Woodruff's ideas allowed London to create roles for exceptional Anglo-Saxons such as David Grief and explain the failures of other whites as due to laws of nature and evolution not under human control, there is also much in Woodruff "to undermine London's view of racial superiority," as his entire argument is "predicated on the failure of the white body"; he does not say that "colonizing out of our proper zone" *shouldn't* but *can't* be done.[5] As "we cannot exterminate them," he says, the "indestructible" darker races will continue to live in the tropics, but they can be used by whites "to their mutual benefit, not as slaves, or serfs, or domestic animals, but as junior partners with little voice in the management of the firm."[6] By the time London had dinner with Woodruff in March 1910, and even in lectures he gave as late as June 1911 quoting Woodruff, London's attitudes toward colonization and race evidently shifted.[7] Loudermilk notes that, as demonstrated in "The Human Drift," written shortly after the Londons' return from the *Snark* voyage, "London maintained his fascination with Anglo-Saxons and with human evolution, but began to cast whites in a far less grand role in that evolution."[8]

As noted in chapter 1, in this infrequently cited essay London posits immigration and colonization as the actions of all races, not just Anglo-Saxons, "motivated by both human need and greed" throughout history, as Loudermilk says.[9] The "human drift" is universal and has been going on since humankind began: "The history of civilisation is a history of wandering, sword in hand, in

search of food."[10] In describing the process in the South Seas, he remarks upon the failure of whites in the region. As Loudermilk notes, "the implication that to be white could also mean to be 'unfit,' and that whiteness itself could be a cause for failure or extinction, could not have been lost on London." For Woodruff nature was "a brutal stock breeder" that "kills off all unsuited to any climate into which they have wandered," including whites. And Woodruff's "idea that species are like glaciers, ultimately over time changeable," complicates, she notes, "any belief in racial essentialism." Thus though London thought he had found a face-saving explanation for his illnesses that also further marked him as essentially white, in fact Woodruff also may have had a more complex effect on his thinking. He had already reached "a level of remove" from Woodruff by the time of the stories of *The House of Pride* (1908), in that Woodruff insisted that leprosy is "more a disease of the brown races than of the whites," while London drew leper characters from several races.[11] Loudermilk finds even more telling London's departure from one of Woodruff's most central concerns: the perils of race-mixing. Woodruff places people of mixed blood below blacks and unequivocally asserts that "half-breeds" cannot persist in nature; the only "surviving races are always pure-blooded and not mixtures."[12] London's experiences in Hawai'i and the Hawaiian characters he created offered much evidence to the contrary; by the time he first visited in 1893—the year U.S. businessmen overthrew the Hawaiian monarchy—pure Polynesians were an ever-declining minority: "it is the very racial mixture of Hawaiian society that so impressed London about Hawai'i. In both his books of Hawaiian stories appear successful, attractive characters of mixed race," Loudermilk concludes.[13]

Still, London's personal failure as a white man in the tropics inspired the despairing tone of much of the work he produced toward the end of the voyage, including *Martin Eden* (1909) and *Adventure* (1911). One finds in every chapter of *The Cruise of the* Snark anxieties about disease versus bodily wholeness and scenes of failed adaptations and passings. At times his desperation in trying to maintain his "authority" as a white man in the South Pacific by surviving its diseases is palpable. *The Cruise of the* Snark is no travel book but rather a psychological—and medical—memoir.

Perhaps no yacht had ever been so aptly named, for London's was called the "Snark" after Lewis Carroll's nonsense poem "The Hunting of the Snark." The poem uncannily presages *Snark*'s trickiness and Captain Eames's incompetence, as in "Fit the Second—The Bellman's Speech":

"What's the good of Mercator's North Poles and Equators,
Tropics, Zones, and Meridian Lines?"
So the Bellman would cry: and the crew would reply
"They are merely conventional signs!

"Other maps are such shapes, with their islands and capes!
But we've got our brave Captain to thank:
(So the crew would protest) "that he's bought us the best—
A perfect and absolute blank!"

This was charming, no doubt; but they shortly found out
That the Captain they trusted so well
Had only one notion for crossing the ocean,
And that was to tingle his bell.

He was thoughtful and grave—but the orders he gave
Were enough to bewilder a crew.
When he cried "Steer to starboard, but keep her head larboard!"
What on earth was the helmsman to do?

Then the bowsprit got mixed with the rudder sometimes:
A thing, as the Bellman remarked,
That frequently happens in tropical climes,
When a vessel is, so to speak, "snarked."

But the principal failing occurred in the sailing,
And the Bellman, perplexed and distressed,
Said he had hoped, at least, when the wind blew due East,
That the ship would not travel due West![14]

The *Snark* was certainly a "Boojum," as it is called in the poem. But she sailed for two years through sometimes dangerous seas, and she brought the crew into contact with a vast array of different peoples and places that virtually no Americans had seen or would know what to make of if they did. London sent back dozens of works—stories, novels, travel narratives, and photographs.

Euro-American literature set in the South Pacific reflects the long history of European-imposed racial stereotypes that helped fuel colonialism, development, and tourism in part by perpetuating the view of traditional "native" cultures as timeless or fixed in the past, the exotic sexuality of indigenous women, and the essentially heathenistic, corrupt, or diseased nature of men of

the tropics. These would all be questioned by London. He portrayed the South Seas largely in terms of the two intertwined patterns displayed in his earlier works, personal and artistic identity and racial relativity. Though his work reflects the contemporary cultural binary of beauty or health versus disease, exotic women versus diseased men, it also generally rejects these stereotypes, as well as the Noble Savage, to look past missionary (and colonizer) categories of the paradisal body and fleshly "corruption." Doing so allows him to approach the islander characters as individuals forced to respond to cultural crises precipitated by whites.[15] London applies the disease motif to white men instead of islanders. Thus once again he presents a dual, paradoxical positioning of whiteness. His white skin gave him the wherewithal to sail his yacht around the Pacific and was the boundary between himself and the nonwhite peoples of the Pacific, as well as the boundary between one world, an inner world of will and agency, and another, a world of chance and sometimes chaos. Yet rather than shielding his inner self, London's skin turned out to be a permeable boundary that both threatened his sense of selfhood (and Western individualistic agency in general), but at the same time such "permeability" allowed him to escape a restricted sense of "self" in many stories, including whiteness, in favor of a competing—an Other's—point of view, to be in an Other's skin, as it were.

It is doubtful that any European knew the Pacific islands were there until the sixteenth century. Yet on the thousands of islands and atolls scattered across the Pacific that comprise what we call Oceania today, as Gary Riedl and Thomas R. Tietze point out,

> the intrepid human spirit of epic exploration of the unknown [had been], carried out perhaps seven centuries before the siege of Troy. Here were enacted in microcosm the same political challenges, erotic obsessions, and dark visions of divinity that had also tormented the lives of Europeans. Here, too, were played out for centuries the sanguinary conflicts of racial warfare that often seem to be a reflexive human response to Otherness, here made horrific by the warriors' widely reported drive to eat the bodies of their enemies and, in ways that varied from culture to culture, to preserve as trophies their opponents' heads.[16]

The South Pacific was settled by nomadic Southeast Asian groups beginning nearly twelve thousand years ago, first to Papua and New Guinea, then to the Solomon Islands—they may have even walked. But as the earth warmed

and the seas rose, this region became islands later known to Europeans as "black islands" or Melanesia. These people later set out in daring canoe journeys and settled throughout the Solomons and New Hebrides, eventually all the way to Fiji, where lighter-skinned Polynesians also arrived, having themselves spent a thousand years colonizing to the east of their home in Samoa. For centuries these groups vied for dominion over one another.[17] Portuguese Captain Álvaro de Mendaña sailed from Peru into the South Pacific in 1567 looking for Terra Australis Incognita, which was thought to be a land of gold. He missed landfall until the Solomons, where he found no gold but took what he pleased from the islanders, based on his belief in his own racial and cultural superiority. English Captain Philip Carteret arrived in 1767. Soon after, Captain James Cook's expeditions created further interest in the region. There were whalers, sandalwood traders, pearl collectors, and fishermen. Copra, the dried kernel of the coconut, was used to make coconut oil, soap, margarine, and cosmetics.[18] The first Pacific literatures in English are from explorers such as Captain Cook and his passenger Joseph Banks; following were the many missionary books and, later, novels of cannibals and bare-breasted maidens by such popular writers as Robert Michael Ballantyne and H. Rider Haggard. Robert Louis Stevenson and Melville wrote sensitive interrogations of white perceptions of the South Seas. French writer Pierre Loti's accounts of Tahiti and the Tahitian paintings and writings of Paul Gauguin further defined tropicality as a zone of the female erotic even as scientists alternatively framed the tropics as the site of disease—both these reductions of the "natives" provided openings for further exploitation by Western powers.

Like Stevenson and Melville's, London's vision in the Pacific, while not free from stereotype, is different from those of other whites in the region, especially those who promoted trade, development, conquest, or religious conversion. In fact, much of what he presents, whether photography, travel narrative, or fiction, directly refutes agreed-upon Euro-American cultural and scientific ideas about the tropics. For this reason, the *Snark* voyage was ultimately a richer source of stories than the Klondike. Hawai'i in particular, during his 1907 and 1915–16 visits, seems to have been a sort of ideal world for him. In *The Cruise of the* Snark (1911), in four collections of Pacific short stories, in the novel *Adventure* (1911), and in other collections such as *When God Laughs* (1911), *The Red One* (1918), and *The Turtles of Tasman* (1916), London writes of the encounters of whites and Pacific islanders. As he did in the Klondike

fiction, such as *Smoke Bellew* (1912), London treated life in the region first from one perspective and then from another, revising and complicating as time went on. The racial point of view varies, from the racial crudities of *Adventure* to the sophisticated narratives of racial relativism in the stories of *On the Makaloa Mat*.

Why such inconsistency? The answer has to do in large part with London's personal investment in the *Snark* voyage and his disappointment at its eventual failure. In addition, his attitudes changed over time, so that it is an error to speak of "London's view of the Pacific" as if it were homogenous. This is clear when we compare *Adventure* to the earlier *South Sea Tales* and the later *A Son of the Sun*, where another shift occurs that again revises his personal role in the Pacific and adopts indigenous points of view. Are London's narrators identifying with the underdog, no matter the color? Is the narrator curious about how a given community, white or black, feels from the inside out? Or does he simply adopt Anglo-Saxonism? And there were different markets, stories versus novels or essays. In the novels and nonfiction London was more likely to assume the worldviews of his audience unexamined, whereas he could take more imaginative freedoms in his short fiction. This reflects the "continuum" of racialism in his work I noted in chapter 1; and clearly, the great work (and nonracialist) from the South Seas experience is the short stories, while the weakest (and most racialist) is the novel *Adventure*.

London's Hawaiian tales dispense with the racial stereotyping of many Klondike works. He seems to have been comfortable with Hawai'i's cosmopolitan society, a place of new intercultural exchange, but quickly became aware that it was no paradise, particularly for immigrant field workers. He wrote an article praising Father Damien's colony of lepers on the island of Moloka'i, and while this did not stir up much local resentment, his tales of whites infected with leprosy, "Good-by, Jack" and "The Sheriff of Kona," coupled with the defiant leper hero of "Koolau the Leper" in *The House of Pride*, alarmed London's white Hawaiian friends, the missionary-descended leaders of the *haole kama'āina*.[19] Not only had he sided with lepers in "Koolau the Leper," but he suggested in the other two stories that skin color was no protection from the dreaded illness. In the South Seas stories that followed, he takes the point of view of a Chinese coolie condemned to death at the hands of his cruel French masters in Tahiti ("The Chinago"), a Malaitan youth who gets revenge upon his sadistic German master ("Mauki"), a Christlike Pitcairn Islander who

saves a doomed ship ("The Seed of McCoy"), and an ancient island woman whose courage saves her family ("The House of Mapuhi"). In *A Son of the Sun* he creates his hero David Grief and then uncreates him, as it were: Grief comes to learn that even as his own skin darkens, his exploits pale next to those of everyday South Seas people.

To an even greater degree, cultural relativism and self-questioning reappear in London's very last stories. In *On the Makaloa Mat*'s "The Water Baby," conflict arises between the "scientific" knowledge of a *haole* and the wisdom of an old Hawaiian fisherman. "The Red One," set on Guadalcanal in the Solomons, is another relativistic portrait of the white newcomer. By the time of "The Water Baby" and "The Red One," written within months of his death in November 1916, London was employing a more mythic, psychologically and culturally layered vision of "difference." Especially after he read Carl Jung in early summer 1916, his sense of adventure turned inward to confront the Other there too, spurring the development of a revisionist psychology beyond competition and survival. The two competing impulses in London's Klondike fiction emerge in the Pacific stories as the need to regain white male autonomy but also identify with the Other. I begin with London's *Cruise of the* Snark and then examine the four collections of South Seas stories, but as I have explicated many of these short stories at length elsewhere, I offer only brief discussions that focus on new insights, with a sustained analysis of only two, one Hawaiian, "The House of Pride," and one from the South Seas, "Mauki."[20] The chapter concludes with a comparison of two very different versions of race in the Solomon Islands, *Adventure* and "The Red One."

ENTERING THE PACIFIC: *THE CRUISE OF THE* SNARK (1911)

The Londons conceived the idea of the *Snark* voyage while sunbathing one day in 1905 at Wake Robin Lodge in Glen Ellen, after reading aloud to camp children Captain Joshua Slocum's account of his solo sail around the world in a thirty-seven-foot sloop.[21] London had just been through a divorce, he'd remarried and then bought his longed-for Sonoma ranch home, and his books and stories were finally producing a steady income. Life was good. Although London had extensive sailing experience in San Francisco Bay, the North Pacific, and the Yellow Sea, his motivation for a voyage that would uproot himself and his wife and cost a fortune to build and sail a small boat across the Pacific

wasn't merely nautical. The reason, London explains in the opening of the book, is first "I LIKE."[22] He sees such a challenge as success in adaptation:

> When I have done some such thing I am exalted. I glow all over. I am aware of a pride in myself that is mine, and mine alone. It is organic. Every fibre of me is thrilling with it. It is a mere matter of satisfaction at adjustment to environment. It is success. Life that lives is successful, and success is the breath of its nostrils. . . . The trip around the world means big moments of living. (*Cruise*, 5)

For him such "moments of living" and the thrill of adapting to them could counterbalance the arbitrariness of life: "It is good to ride the tempest and feel godlike" (*Cruise*, 6–7). He also told Charmian he thought the trip would bring them both "'worthwhile things—the free air and earth, sky and sea, and the opportunities of knowing worthwhile people.'"[23] To pay for the trip, London wrote furiously and made complicated arrangements for large advances with several magazines to sell certain types of stories to each: *Woman's Home Companion* would have studies of home life of the "natives"; *Collier's*, illustrated news articles; and *Cosmopolitan*, a travelogue. His book publisher, Macmillan, assisted with advances and royalties. Difficulties arose and persisted among these contracts as to exclusivity on certain topics.

The five-ton iron keel of the forty-five-foot ketch *Snark*—which London had designed—was to have been laid at the H. P. Anderson Shipyard in San Francisco on April 18, 1906, but fate intervened in the guise of the San Francisco Earthquake, which struck as far north as Santa Rosa, near the Londons' ranch; they could see the fires in San Francisco from the top of Sonoma Mountain. Perhaps this was an omen. By the time the *Snark* was ready, a year behind schedule and over budget the spring of 1907, it had had its share of woes. Many more were to come, some caused by the earthquake, in the form of shoddy materials and craftsmanship used due to the construction boom. Finally she was ready, or so they thought, and early on the morning of April 22, 1907, London hoisted a University of California blue and gold sweater up the mast as their burgee, and they set sail from Oakland Harbor for Hawai'i. The six-member crew entailed London, Charmian, Charmian's uncle Roscoe Eames as captain, Bert Stolz as mate, Martin Johnson as cook, and the Londons' servant Paul Tochigi as cabin boy. With hundreds of cheering people dockside, the *Snark* sailed west.

It is a miracle they reached Honolulu. One of their first unhappy discoveries was that "Captain" Eames had misrepresented his sailing credentials and knew virtually nothing about navigation. It was also soon clear that damage done in

harbor between the February shakedown sail and the April departure—two lumber-scows had dragged anchor and laid up against the sides of the *Snark*—was more extensive than they had realized. The incident left the ketch with a flattened rail on one side and pushed the other side out two inches, which caused steering difficulties. Soon nearly every system on board had failed, a series of mishaps that London compiled as chapter 2 of *The Cruise of the* Snark, "The Inconceivable and the Monstrous": the sea anchor failed so she wouldn't heave to; she wouldn't come about; all four watertight compartments below-decks leaked; the sides and bottom leaked; gasoline leaked out through the bulkheads, creating a health and fire hazard; because of leaks much of the food spoiled and had to be thrown overboard; the seventy-horsepower engine fell off its block and had to be lashed to the deck, useless; the coal, delivered in rotten potato sacks, went washing through the scuppers into the ocean; the head became inoperable; the life boat was found to leak; and the dinghy engine wouldn't start. All of this was accompanied by violent seasickness.

Eventually the seasickness lifted; the crew began to solve many of their problems and even to enjoy the voyage. As Johnson relates, on May 9, despite a rough sea, they were feeling better and listened to some of the five hundred records London had aboard for use on a hand-cranked phonograph. Johnson speculated "How strange it would be, if one could stand off a hundred yards and watch the little *Snark* go by on the crested waves, while the voice of Caruso, say, sang from our companionway."[24] The boat's ballast was four hundred books. London was even able to return to his regime of writing the usual thousand words a day, producing several works, including a masterpiece, "To Build a Fire." In it he revised the 1902 version written for *Youth's Companion*. It was a curiously cold story to revisit and rewrite aboard a boat bound for Hawai'i, but a study in survival that seemed quite appropriate; he finished it days after their May 20 landfall at Pearl Harbor on Oahu. *Martin Eden*, the autobiographical novel of the struggles of a poverty-stricken young sailor-writer, was begun in early August when the *Snark* sailed from Oahu to the Big Island. For South Seas subject matter London's sources would overwhelmingly be drawn from his own observations, but before the *Snark*'s first landfall he had immersed himself in books written in the previous decades by missionaries, which he annotated, especially specific accounts of indigenous practices. But his views on the Pacific's many peoples would be very different from theirs, and when he did note the missionaries' attitudes, toward "diseased" islanders, for example, he often turns this around to a perception of the missionaries as the ones who

were diseased, twisted by their rigid beliefs and racial prejudices, like their fictional descendant, Percival Ford of "The House of Pride."[25]

The Cruise of the Snark is a highly selective retelling of the voyage, and, as noted earlier, focuses on London and his diseases, tending to intense psychological metaphors. As Rod Edmond puts it, "London's counter-discourse of health, incorporating as it does a myth of colonization, is almost simultaneously undermined by the Pacific taking its revenge on the colonizer."[26] London's self-preoccupation is partly revealed by comparing *The Cruise of the* Snark with Charmian's *Log of the* Snark and Johnson's *Through the South Seas with Jack London*, both of which are more traditional travel books, detailing the places and peoples that are part of a general survey of the location.[27] Their narratives are descriptive, alert, cheerful (though they do tell of discomforts), and both occasionally aim at the sublime. Charmian dwells upon day-to-day operations of the boat, interspersed with romantic passages about the sea, her latest souvenir-hunting, and descriptions of the daily lives of the islanders.[28] Johnson is more captivated with the appearances and behavior of the islanders, but throughout most of his subsequent exploring and filmmaking he relied on stereotypes rather than reveal the people he encountered as three-dimensional figures, as London did. London's *Cruise of the* Snark zeroes in on one or two telling events or ideas in each chapter, and each time they symbolize a vexed aspect of race and authorial identity. In the Pacific London observed the working-out of Darwin's theories of competition and connection as never before. He read John Howard Moore's *Universal Kinship*, marking passages on "the kinship of all the inhabitants of the planet Earth. . . . Man is not different from the rest. . . . There has been no more miracle in the origin of the human species than in the origin of any other species. And there is no more miracle in the origin of a species than there is in the birth of a molecule or in the breaking of a tired wave on the beach."[29]

In Hawai'i the *Snark* was hauled for extensive repairs. Eames was fired, and a new captain and cabin boy were signed on.[30] The five months the Londons spent in Hawai'i proved to be happier than they had dreamed. Wherever they went they were welcomed and entertained, even by Hawaiian royalty. They stayed in a cottage at Pearl Lochs and in a spacious tent-cabin on Waikiki, near the site where the original Outrigger Canoe Club would be built (now occupied by the Outrigger Waikiki Hotel). They visited Maui, the Big Island, Kaua'i, and Moloka'i. On Maui they rode over the Von Tempsky ranch on the slopes of the volcano Haleakalā, and on the Big Island they were guests of the

Balding family at Wainaku, where they tried the dangerous pastime of riding bundles of sugarcane down steep flumes constructed to bring the sugarcane to the mills on the valley floor.[31] London learned to surf; his article "A Royal Sport" (chapter 6 of *The Cruise of the* Snark) popularized the Hawaiian sport on the West Coast of the United States.

London was struck not only with the natural beauty and the healthy, soothing environment Hawai'i offered but with its mythologies, peoples, and politics. At first he merely perceived the value of the territory to the United States: Americans on the mainland "don't know what they've got!" he exulted.[32] But he came to believe Hawai'i represented the chance for an ideal community quite different from the Anglo-American vision, one of diverse peoples in a progressive and cosmopolitan environment. He also came to see that Hawai'i had not developed this way. London became involved in the Hands-Across-the-Pacific Club (and later in the Pan-Pacific Union)—an antiwar movement for world brotherhood and sisterhood founded by Alexander Hume Ford (1868–1945), a young entrepreneur who settled in Hawai'i in 1907.[33] A week and a day after the *Snark* reached Pearl Harbor, Ford greeted London at the Royal Hawaiian Hotel. The two became friends, and Ford introduced London to surfing.[34] For London surfing was "a royal sport for the natural kings of the earth," the surfer as a "brown Mercury" (*Cruise*, 75). Practicing in "the wonderful sun of Hawaii" London received a severe sunburn that developed long blisters down the backs of this legs. But his description of the "royal" Hawaiian surfer is telling: he does not stop with the typical exoticized view of the tropical male body as "magnificent," but describes the local surfer as a "Kanaka—and more, he is a man, a member of the kingly species that has mastered matter and the brutes and lorded it over creation" (*Cruise*, 77–78).[35] As Loudermilk has pointed out, London "previously referred only to the Anglo-Saxon as a master of matter, but he now invites the Hawaiian into that exclusive category."[36]

Ford biographer Valerie Noble records that at the time they met London and Ford held similar racialist views; the founding of Ford's clubs was based not only upon the notion of universal racial equality but also on the business interests of the United States in developing the Pacific Rim. They both believed that British and U.S. industry had modernized Asia and Russia and would continue to lead the world. Yet despite their shared conviction that the Anglo-Saxon "race" was superior, they both recognized the coming economic power of Asia, especially, as Ford put it, "the agile, hardy Jap."[37] London's essays "These Bones Will Rise Again" (1901) and "The Yellow Peril" (1904)

similarly touted Anglo-Saxons but expressed concerns about the power of Japan and China. Ford and London's support for the clubs was in part an attempt to stop Japan's ascension as a world power by promoting an American ideal of developing tourism and trade in Hawai'i. The Pan-Pacific Union was therefore formed with the United States, Australia, New Zealand, and China as early members.[38] Yet whatever the movement's racialist, nationalist, or mercenary underpinnings, it still had idealistic goals, expressed best by Percy Hunter, cofounder with Ford of the Hands-Across-the-Pacific Club: "Our ideal is to encourage a true friendship among all people of the Pacific. We desire that the various great nations bordering this, the World's Greatest Ocean, should live together in true amity, that they should come to know each other better, that they should trade and travel and join in industrial and commercial activity and know no cause of quarrel or bitterness." Hunter rejected his colleagues' racial prejudice against the Japanese: "My answer has been that the stories of Japanese invasion of America are sheer inventions of yellow journalism, and that the members of The Hands Around the Pacific Club are profoundly convinced that Japan intends to live in Friendship with all the peoples of the world." He notes Australia's prohibition on Asian immigration, but also that Asians seem to have no great wish to move to Australia.[39]

Ford recalled London speaking to the Pan-Pacific Union in 1915 and 1916: "In Hawaii Jack London has been preaching the doctrine of a Patriotism of the Pacific, and now some three hundred people of every race and creed known to Pacific lands gather together to demonstrate to the legislators of the American Republic that the people of every race and creed of the Pacific can and do get together and work together for the good of one and all."[40] London's 1915 lecture for the union at the Outrigger Club, published as "The Language of the Tribe," clearly reflects how far London's views had moved away from the earlier racialism he had shared with Ford. Loudermilk identifies within the speech London's recognition of "not just the possibility, but also the value of racial mixing and interaction; . . . he now saw that interaction between races and cultures is inevitable, and that communication and understanding between races is both necessary and good."[41] He emphasizes not the difference but the sameness of the Americans and the Japanese because of the fact that neither presently understands the other's language, and not because of some essential difference. English is "composed of hundreds of thousands of words; the Japanese language the same, and yet these great peoples are narrow and limited and they prevent the man who knows only English from understand-

ing the man who knows only Japanese. The 'language of the tribe' I referred to was the world language—the cosmic language."[42] He recalls trying to converse with a Chinese man in Manchuria:

> My Japanese boy spoke pigeon [sic] English, and in pigeon English I gave him my message. A Korean boy was traveling with me who spoke both Japanese and Chinese, but no English, and my Japanese boy in Japanese gave him my message, and he in turn spoke to the Chinese gentlemen. But we exchanged ideas. I asked, "How is your health today?" a very simple question, but it meant a lot. It made that Chinese gentleman feel that I really wanted to know how his health was. It was a question from one man to another, and he would answer me by the same process I had used in asking the question.

He adds that the "world language has no better chance for a start than right now, here in our Hawaii, where the people of all the countries that rest around the edge of the Pacific meet. Until you learn to understand the people about you, you will never make them understand you."[43]

London's vision was of a place "where men of all races can come, where they can eat together and smoke together and talk together," a sincere hope but also a fantasy notion of a personal home:

> I began studying the language of the tribe when I was very young. My first lesson was in my own home, and I then began to find out how hard it is to speak and understand that great tribal language of the world people. First you must have sympathy, then you must study out, not what the other fellow says, but what he means, for the language of the world tribe is not always reducible to words—for in this language words often confuse, rather than help to an understanding. To illustrate I will tell you of my first lesson in the language of the tribe. My old Mammy Jenny was a negro slave who had been bought and sold upon the block before the Civil War. I loved her almost as much as I loved no one else, for from her black breasts I drew the milk of life. In her I had all my faith.

He proceeds to tell of a time when he thought Prentiss told him a lie. Reading Paul Du Chaillu's story "The Gorilla Hunter," he asked her if Du Chaillu was correct that no gorilla had ever been brought in captivity to America or Europe:

> Now I wanted to know whether Mammy Jenny had been born and lived in Africa, but I loved her too dearly to hurt her feelings, so I diplomatically asked Mammy

> Jenny if she had ever seen a gorilla. . . . When she did say "Yes," I clapped my hands with delight. "Where?" I asked. "Why, lots of dem, honey, down on the plantation down South," she replied, and I went away broken-hearted. She had told me a lie. Again I read everything that Paul Du Chaillu had to say about gorillas. He clearly stated that they could not live in America. For five years, until I was twelve years old, I carried this in my breast, and oh! how often it hurt me, and then I read books for older boys, and I read of the Civil War, and the war the guerillas carried on, only they spelt it g-u-e-rilla. Mammy Jenny had spoken in a different language from mine and I had not understood.[44]

Illustrating his views on race with memories of his home with Prentiss speaks volumes. He concludes his lecture by remarking of his present home that "not once in California where I live have I entertained a Japanese . . . this has been my first chance to meet with men that I want to meet and know better."[45]

London's interest in idealistic attempts such as the Pan-Pacific Union and his critique of Hawai'i's colonialism and hierarchies of race were to a significant degree fueled by a particular "voyage" the Londons made on the island of Oahu, their June 7, 1907, trip to Ewa side, as it is called there, the western part of the island, where the huge sugar and pineapple plantations had been laid out and cultivated. Charmian advises, "When you come to Hawaii, do not fail to visit one of the big sugar plantations, to see the working of this foremost industry of the Territory, for nowhere in the world has it been brought to such perfection."[46] Typical of most travel writing of the day, Charmian describes their visit as picturesque:

> The railroad traverses a level stretch of country dotted with pretty villages peopled by imported human breeds. In my mind's eye lingers one wee hamlet like a jewel in the sun—a group of little Portuguese shacks covered with brilliant flowering vines and hedged with scarlet hibiscus, all imaged in a still stream that brimmed even with its green banks. Not for nothing were these sunny-blooded children of Portugal blessed with wide and beautiful eyes; for they can see no virtue in a dwelling that is not surrounded and entwined with living color. No matter how squalid their circumstance, they do not rest until growing things begin to weave a covering of beauty.[47]

Whereas London is outraged at the labor conditions, Charmian dwells on the charm of the scene and freely repeats the stereotype that the Japanese were

destined to be field-workers while the Hawaiians were not. She enjoyed the "perfection" of the plantations, though London would have a different reaction—the easy dream of *haole kama'āina*–controlled Hawai'i gave way to a vision of a lost Hawai'i replaced by a modern one based upon exploitive, racist labor practices. Ford arranged the visit to Ewa Sugar Plantation led by plantation manager H. H. Renton, inviting some people Ford wanted London to meet: Joseph P. Cooke, the head of Alexander & Baldwin; Lorrin A. Thurston, publisher of the *Honolulu Advertiser*; A. deSouza Caovarro, the Portuguese consul; as well as "an interesting young South African millionaire, who was much more bent on discussing socialism with Jack London than inspecting sugar mills."[48] But on Ewa side London identified not with the Honolulu barons but with the indentured workers of the plantations, who for him were not at all picturesque, reflecting as they did successive waves of cheap imported labor—Chinese, Japanese, Portuguese, Filipino.[49]

The Londons' July 1907 and 1915 visits to the leper colony on Moloka'i's Kalauapapa peninsula also had a transforming effect on London's writings about the Pacific, addressing so dramatically definitions of identity, race, health versus disease, white versus native, rebels and outsiders versus the establishment. At the turn of the twentieth century leprosy (now known as Hansen's Disease) not only was believed to be highly contagious but was labeled as a curse, its sufferers beyond the pale of normal society. Moloka'i had been a haven for all manner of outlawry, rape, murder, and drunkenness before the coming of the Belgian priest Father Damien, who turned it into a model community. One of London's friends in Hawai'i, Lucius E. Pinkham, president of the Board of Health and later territorial governor, wished to dispel distorted notions about Moloka'i and the lepers. He asked London to visit the leper colony on the Fourth of July and write about it for the world, which London did in "The Lepers of Molokai," chapter 7 in *The Cruise of the* Snark. "Leprosy is terrible," London writes, "there is no getting away from that"; but, he points out, worse sights can been seen in any major U.S. city (*Cruise*, 105). He relates the lepers' Fourth of July parade, their bands, and their horsemanship contests. He and Charmian also witnessed the "Parade of the Horribles," as they called themselves, in their humorous and colorful costumes. Telling about the human and equine shenanigans in a donkey-race, London writes that "I tried to check myself. I assured myself that I was witnessing one of the horrors of Molokai, and that it was shameful for me, under such circumstances, to be so light-hearted

and light-headed. But it was no use. . . . And all the while nearly a thousand lepers were laughing uproariously at the fun. Anybody in my place would have joined with them in having a good time" (92–93).

London's humane descriptions of lepers went a long way toward changing world opinion. He focuses not on the physical effects of the disease but on the everyday work lives of the lepers and on certain individuals. Praising its scenic beauty, he also describes Moloka'i as a place of fruitful industry:

> Everywhere are grassy pastures over which roam the hundreds of horses which are owned by the lepers. . . . In the little harbour of Kalaupapa lie fishing boats and a steam launch, all of which are privately owned and operated by lepers. . . . Their fish they sell to the Board of Health, and the money they receive is their own. While I was there, one night's catch was four thousand pounds.
>
> And as these men fish, others farm. All trades are followed. One leper, a pure Hawaiian, is the boss painter. He employs eight men, and takes contracts for painting buildings from the Board of Health. He is a member of the Kalaupapa Rifle Club, where I met him, and I must confess that he was far better dressed than I. . . . Major Lee, an American and long a marine engineer for the Inter Island Steamship Company, I met actively at work in the new steam laundry, where he was busy installing the machinery. I met him often, afterwards, and one day he said to me:
>
> "Give us a good breeze about how we live here. For heaven's sake write us up straight. Put your foot down on this chamber-of-horrors rot and all the rest of it. We don't like being misrepresented. We've got some feelings. Just tell the world how we really are in here." (*Cruise*, 100–101)

London's Moloka'i photographs tell lepers' personal stories with dignity and eloquence and without sentimentality. He contrasts their lives with those of patients in tuberculosis sanitariums on the mainland and also remarks that if he had to "live in Molokai for the rest of my life, or in the East End of London, the East Side of New York, or the Stockyards of Chicago, I would select Molokai without debate. I would prefer one year of life in Molokai to five years of life in the above-mentioned cesspools of human degradation and misery" (*Cruise*, 105).

The *Snark* continued her sail from Hilo on October 7, 1907, heading southeast for the Marquesas. For the entire two-month leg they never encountered another vessel. This was in part because the route London chose to cross the trade winds was supposed to be impossible for a craft under sail. London had intended to use the engines repaired in Hawai'i to help them at key crossings,

but of course all the engines again broke down, leaving the *Snark* to depend only on her sails and on London's optimism and increasing navigational skills. In the "Pacific solitude," a phrase London may have borrowed from William Clark Russell's *The Romance of a Midshipman* (1898), the crew began to run low on freshwater, and they battled fierce storms before making port in Taiohae Bay on the Marquesan island of Nuku Hiva. Despite the length of the traverse, they—especially London—enjoyed the respite from telephones, reporters, visitors, and newspapers.

In the Marquesas London eagerly expected the idyllic "Typee Valley" (Taipivai) Melville wrote of, but he was disappointed. The islands had been ruined by white intruders with their diseases and their destruction of native customs. The "Marquesans" were pale shadows of their forebears, having been overrun by others and suffering tuberculosis and elephantiasis. Encountering this naturalistic Typee was the first act in what would be a progressive shattering and reforming of London's notions of the South Seas, a negotiation between his naturalistic and romantic projects, between beauty and disease. Melville's Typee, with its handsome men and women, had fed London's dreams of adventure at sea, but now he wrote, "There are more races than there are persons, but it is a wreckage of races at best. Life faints and stumbles and gasps itself away . . . asthma, phthisis, and tuberculosis flourish as luxuriantly as the vegetation. Everywhere, from the few grass huts, arises the racking cough or exhausted groan of wasted lungs." Melville's Tommo confesses that "Had a glimpse of the gardens of paradise been revealed to me I could scarcely have been more ravished with the sight,'" but Melville, says London, "saw a garden. We saw a wilderness" (*Cruise*, 165–67).[50] As Charmian put it, "we were too late."[51]

Arriving at Taiohae Bay on the evening of December 6, 1907, London steered past Sentinel Rock in darkness and awoke the next morning "in fairyland." They were afloat in a "placid harbor that nestled in a vast amphitheatre, the towering vine-clad walls of which seemed to rise directly from the water. Far up, to the east, we glimpsed the thin line of a trail, visible in one place, where it scoured across the face of the wall. 'The path by which Toby escaped from Typee!' we cried" (*Cruise*, 156–57). London's repetition of Melville's metaphorical "amphitheatre" highlights the writerly act of performance—his own and Melville's; also, ironically, his attention not just to the natural beauty around him but the escape route from Paradise taken by Toby situates London's chapter within the multiple narrative contradictions of *Typee*.[52]

The Londons rented a house in Taiohae that Robert Louis Stevenson had

also used when he visited Nuku Hiva on the *Casco*. The *Snark* party recovered from their long traverse, and on the cool morning of December 10 rode "ferocious little stallions" up an ancient road and into the thick jungles. "On every side were the vestiges of a one-time dense population. Wherever the eye could penetrate the thick growth, glimpses were caught of stone walls and of stone foundations" (*Cruise*, 161). By 1907, however, most of the abandoned houses had already been overtaken by the jungle, and little sign of the bustling community Melville described remained:

> Where were the hundred groves of the breadfruit tree he saw? . . . Where was the Ti of Mehevi, the bachelors' hall, the palace where women were taboo, and where he ruled with his lesser chieftains, keeping the half-dozen dusty and torpid ancients to remind them of the valorous past? From the swift stream no sounds arose of maids and matrons pounding tapa. And where was that hut that old Narheyo eternally builded? In vain I looked for him perched ninety feet from the ground in some tall cocoanut, taking his morning smoke. (*Cruise*, 167)

Indeed, only a "few dozen wretched creatures" were left from a population Melville fifty years earlier had estimated at two thousand. The reason? "Not alone were the Typeans physically magnificent; they were pure. Their air did not contain all the bacilli and germs and microbes of disease that fill our own air. And when the white men imported in their ships these various microorganisms of disease, the Typeans crumbled and went down before them" (*Cruise*, 167–70). London is led to wonder: "When one considers the situation, one is almost driven to the conclusion that the white race flourishes on impurity and corruption." The cause is natural selection:

> We of the white race are the survivors and the descendants of the thousands of generations of survivors in the war with the microorganisms. Whenever one of us was born with a constitution peculiarly receptive to these minute enemies, such a one promptly died. Only these of us survived who could withstand them. We who are alive are the immune, the fit—the ones best constituted to live in a world of hostile microorganisms. The poor Marquesans had undergone no selection. They were not immune. And they, who had made a custom of eating their enemies, were now eaten by enemies so microscopic as to be invisible, and against whom no war of dart and javelin was possible. (*Cruise*, 170–71)

These comments belie an unease with the presence of whites in the South Seas that would swell to outright condemnation. Martin Johnson was similarly

struck: "Better had it been had the natives never seen the missionaries. What happened in the Marquesas has happened in many other South Sea islands, and no doubt is happening to-day. My conscience smote me. To think, the very pennies I had given in Sunday School for foreign missions had contributed to the calamitous end of the inhabitants of this beautiful garden-spot!"[53] It is important to note that, just as in his portrayal of the lepers, for London the evolutionary lesson in the Typeeans' failure to adapt did not occasion a scientific "proof" of their unfitness, as Woodruff or Kidd might have inspired, but rather a sense of tragedy.

The Londons stayed the night in a small valley called Hooumi, where they were relieved to find at least a few healthy Typeeans, but they also saw many more who were ill. After a feast they selected an empty *pae-pae* from the hundreds there. They watched the moon rise over Typee:

> The air was like balm, faintly scented with the breath of flowers. It was a magic night, deathly still, without the slightest breeze to stir the foliage; and one caught one's breath and felt the pang that is almost hurt, so exquisite was the beauty of it. Faint and far could be heard the thin thunder of the surf upon the beach. There were no beds; and we drowsed and slept wherever we thought the floor softest. Near by, a woman panted and moaned in her sleep, and all about us the dying islanders coughed in the night. (*Cruise*, 177)

London's conclusion to this chapter, with its oppositional metaphors—balm and disease, breath of flowers and racking cough, a magical night also deathly still, the sublime that "hurts"—and real hurt, the moaning and panting—suggests that while he and his wife are free enough and safe enough to sleep anywhere they like and dream romantic dreams, all around them, locked into illness and death, lie the last Typeeans, dying one by one and altogether as a culture.

Yet London's melancholy realization of the disappearance of the indigenous cultures of Polynesia is counterpointed by a certain offhandedness, a few self-deprecating jokes and situations, and an occasional breeziness of style. He seems compelled to ironize his own status in such sections as the frightening attack of yellow wasps on Nuku Hiva, or when he and Charmian try to bathe in "Fayaway's Lake" and are attacked by sand flies. A writer intent upon creating a single effect to his "superior" position would not include these moments. London positions himself in the tropics at war with tropical diseases. He is at once the white man privileged enough to travel and give opinions, but he is also the white man as alien under attack. Being occasionally beaten has the

effect of putting himself, in a sense, in the natives' place in the global exchange of disease, revealing that he, too, is made to suffer by failures to adapt.

As Melville, Tommo, and London display ambiguous, dual, or conflicting emotional orientations toward their island environments and toward civilization back home, they also experience other cultures with an understanding of those cultures' historical and social realities.[54] This is of course the preparation to experiencing tragedy. In Greg Dening's phrase, they have "crossed the beach"—traversed the transitional distance between traveler-conqueror and Native—and therefore their point of view is altered.[55] Mendaña's helmsman Pedro Fernández de Quiros wrote that the massacre committed by the Portuguese troops would not have happened had there been "someone to make us understand each other." Melville and London tried to do that, and their efforts are still remarkable. *Typee* "broke the mould of writing about the Pacific," as Melville scholar Ruth Blair notes, because of its "serious attention to the particular in Polynesian life that is more than decoration," and because it dramatizes the tensions and ambiguities inherent in the encounter between Europeans and Polynesians."[56] Just as Tommo finds his notions of the "savage" inadequate, London's pet race theories about Anglo-Saxon superiority were replaced by racial relativism; aside from admiration for islanders, London's negative characterization of the "inevitable white man" echoes Tommo's notion of whiteness as deadly.[57]

As Blair observes, while "Cannibalism was the major pretext on which Europeans could designate the otherwise seemingly paradisal Polynesians fallen," Melville and London portray cannibalism as not only a sign of savagery but as a cultural practice among others. Tommo even asks whether eating human flesh "so very far exceeds in barbarity" the harsher forms of punishment routinely used in the United States: "The fiend-like skill we display in the invention of all manner of death-dealing engines, the vindictiveness with which we carry on our wars, . . . are enough of themselves to distinguish the white civilized man as the most ferocious animal on the face of the earth."[58] Later he remarks that cannibalism "is practiced among several of the primitive tribes in the Pacific, but it is upon the bodies of slain enemies alone; and horrible and fearful as the custom is, immeasurably as it is to be abhorred and condemned, still I assert that those who indulge in it are in other respects humane and virtuous."[59] London lauds Melville for reporting that cannibalism really took place; *Typee* was no "fairy story by ultracivilized men, who dislike, perhaps, the notion that their own savage forebears have somewhere in the past been

addicted to similar practices," but unlike Tommo he laments, "I suppose I shall not have the chance in these degenerate days to see any long-pig eaten." He consoles himself that at least he has managed to buy "a duly certified Marquesan calabash, oblong in shape, curiously carved, over a century old, from which has been drunk the blood of two shipmasters" (*Cruise*, 159–60).[60] While on the one hand London, in accord with racialist theories, relegates the Typeeans and their cannibalism to the primitive past, he seems to find something to embrace in this version of the "abysmal brute," and, further, suggests that ancestors of whites engaged in this practice at one time. Melville and London's narratives of the Marquesas reflect their ability to "be amongst the 'others,'" as Blair says of Melville. There, for them, Western civilization was just a set of practices, no more ordained by God than a cannibal feast or a flesh-eating microbe.[61]

The Tahiti chapter of *The Cruise of the* Snark focuses on an American living in Papeete known as the Nature Man, whose name was Ernest Darling and whom London had met years ago in California. Edmond sees the Nature Man as an emblem of European regeneration in contrast to the degeneration of Typee.[62] Darling does at first seem to be the prototype of the healthy beachcomber who, though white, could adapt to the tropics and thrive. As a young man Darling was ill and found he had to escape mental and physical breakdown at his physician father's home in Oregon. His illness resembled the fashionable one for sensitive young men at the turn of the twentieth century, neurasthenia, and was cured not by the many medical treatments he underwent but by his rebellion against his illness. Darling bolted. He headed to Tahiti, where he went about in a red loincloth preaching socialism to the islanders. He built and labored on a terraced farm in the wilds above the harbor. There he wrote his own version of the Ten Commandments in phonetic spelling: "Thous shalt not eet meet" and "Vizit troppikle cuntriz." The Londons admired Darling's "Return-to-Nature life," as Charmian called it.[63]

However, the Nature Man is not an emblem of a successful white man in the South Seas and does not reverse the sense of decline from the Typee chapter. Alarmed at his unconventional lifestyle, even for Tahiti, and his socialism (in front of his shack he flew a red flag that was visible in much of Papeete), the local French authorities seized and blocked the road to Darling's farm. As the white man's dream of paradise was refuted by the state of (white) affairs in the Marquesas, here even in fabled Tahiti the dream of crossing the beach was doomed: "'Never mind their pesky road,' he said to me as we dragged ourselves up a shelf of rock and sat down, panting, to rest. 'I'll get an air machine soon

and fool them. I'm clearing a level space for a landing stage for the airships, and next time you come to Tahiti you will alight right at my door'" (*Cruise*, 191–93). Darling sounds like London in his grand dreams of success, and it is no wonder that London concludes the chapter about the Nature Man nostalgically: "And I shall see you always as I saw you that last day, when the Snark poked her nose once more through the passage in the smoking reef, outward bound, and I waved good-bye to those on shore. Not least in goodwill and affection was the wave I gave to the golden sun-god in the scarlet loincloth, standing upright in his tiny outrigger canoe" (197). In the Nature Man London found a dualistic figure: though Darling seemed the very model of the "white savage" who had "crossed the beach" and entered the Tahitian community, living as the Tahitians did, he was rejected for modern political reasons. Thus crossing the beach and trying to enter into community with the islanders was not enough; Darling had not accounted for the French colonial bureaucracy and French nationalism, and he did not realize that the locals too would view him and his socialism with fear and suspicion. Nature Man was a romantic dream of nature defeated by the everyday political realities of life in the South Seas.

The *Snark* stopped next at Bora-Bora, which seems to have been London's favorite spot on the entire voyage. Always a generous host himself, London fondly relates the pleasures of the island's hospitality. Visiting the home of his new helmsman Tehei (the inspiration for Otoo in "The Heathen") and his wife Bihaura, he and his party were feasted "in the high seat of abundance," with raw fish marinated in lime juice, roast chicken, suckling pig, bananas, yams, poi, coconut milk, and coffee. Sleeping in happy comfort in their host's house, London muses,

> [O]f all the entertainment I have received in this world at the hands of all sorts of races in all sorts of places, I have never received entertainment that equalled this at the hands of this brown-skinned couple of Tahaa. I do not refer to the presents, the free-handed generousness, the high abundance, but to the fineness of courtesy and consideration and tact, and to the sympathy that was real sympathy in that it was understanding. . . . Perhaps the most delightful feature of it was that it was due to no training, to no complex social ideals, but that it was the untutored and spontaneous outpouring from their hearts. (*Cruise*, 209–10)

Bora-Bora was the closest to paradise that the *Snark* found—a tourist's paradise, that is. As David A. Moreland has noted, London had found a place of

"natural kindness and hospitality . . . among uncorrupted natives. . . . Set in contrast . . . will be the other natural man of the South Pacific, the black man of Melanesia, whom London usually presented as a cross between a demon and a beast."[64] Despite its descriptions of feasts and celebrations, "The High Seat of Abundance" is one of the weakest chapters of the book, and London's usual racial insights are absent.

After departing the Society Islands the *Snark* crew made for Samoa, Fiji, the New Hebrides, and finally the Solomon Islands. London writes: "If I were a king, the worst punishment I could inflict on my enemies would be to banish them to the Solomons. On second thought, king or no king, I don't think I'd have the heart to do it" (*Cruise*, 283). The "Melanesians" of the Solomons were darker, wilder-looking, and "alien" in contrast to the lighter-skinned "Polynesians" of Hawai'i and Tahiti, who were described as "gentle" and therefore were more acceptable racially and culturally to the Americans. In the Solomons the crew spent much of their time either living at Pennduffryn Plantation on Guadalcanal, where the whites seemed as grotesque as any savage, and in short forays to the neighboring islands and villages.

As the *Snark* drew closer to the Solomons, from Fiji on, evidence of brutality, savagery, and the negative effects of colonialism combined to suggest a social climate that seemed to befit the disease-ridden physical environment. Most terrifying was the attack by furious islanders at Malu on Malaita. The Londons had gone on a "blackbirding," or slaving ship, the *Minota*, and were besieged and nearly overrun when they ran aground near an island. Headlines around the world screamed that they had been captured by cannibals, but disaster was averted when the local missionary and Captain Keller of the nearby *Eugénie* quelled the riot. (Sadly the *Snark* herself was eventually sold to a company that converted her into a blackbirder.)[65] Not only were the people warlike among themselves, but with the arrival of the whites came new forms of slavery and abuse. London describes the moral degradation of the whites, with their laxity, alcoholism, and stupidity. As Edmond notes, "The idea of European immunity from the diseased Pacific, which the stories explore so uneasily, had completely broken down. . . . In terms of London's own imaginative logic the Pacific, or at least its western darker heart, had taken its revenge."[66]

Given the frights of the Solomons, a mere yachting party would have simply headed somewhere more congenial, but the *Snark* crew lingered in the Solomons for five months, the same amount of time they had been in Hawai'i. London was there to see, to learn, and to experience life in a very different

environment with very alien peoples. By December 1908, however, London was so ill that the Londons had to leave the *Snark* at anchor on Guadalcanal and travel to Australia by steamer for London to go into the hospital. Confident of a quick recovery, he had agreed to a series of lectures across the continent but soon realized that he would not be up to that. The press statement, "A Brief Explanation," he issued from his hospital bed in Sydney notes his manifold diseases, especially the peeling of the hands, which apparently baffled "[t]he biggest specialist in Australia in this branch." He wryly notes, "There are many boats and many voyages, only one set of toe-nails but I have only one body; and, . . . I have prescribed myself my own climate and environment, where always before my nervous equilibrium has been maintained. . . . There is nothing more for me to say except this, namely, a request to all my friends. Please forego congratulating us upon our abandonment of the voyage. We are heart-broken."[67]

HAOLES AND HAWAIIANS IN *THE HOUSE OF PRIDE* (1912)

Although his friend from Molokaʻi, Dr. Edward S. Goodhue, also a Pan-Pacific Union member and host of the Londons in Kona, listed *The House of Pride* as one of "The One Hundred Most Important Books on Hawaii" in the *Honolulu Star-Bulletin* on February 1, 1910, many *haole kamaʻāina* residents of Hawaiʻi did not agree.[68] Several of the stories in this collection ignited protest: the elite feared that radical working-class politics and the mention of leprosy would taint Hawaiʻi's growing tourist business. They also reacted to the "didactic" nature of these stories, "populated with all of the races of the islands" and "straightforward criticisms of colonialism," as Loudermilk notes.[69] The powerful of Honolulu were in no mood to be lectured. London was denounced in letters to the editor sections and by his friend, *Honolulu Advertiser* publisher Lorrin Thurston, notably in the January 7 and February 1, 1910, editions.

Together the Thurstons and Londons visited Ewa side on Oahu and the Von Tempksy Haleakalā Ranch on Maui in 1907. But by 1910 Thurston had come to feel that London had betrayed their friendship by mentioning Hawaiʻi's racial hierarchies, labor injustice, and leprosy; in his "Bystander" column, he wrote, "Now, I look upon London as a sneak of the first water, a thoroughly untrustworthy man and an ungrateful and untruthful bounder. This is the result of his two latest Hawaiian stories, in both of which he has made the worst out of the leprosy situation here, distorted facts, invented others when

the truth was not enough to suit his purpose and thoroughly misrepresented conditions." These stories were "The Sheriff of Kona" and "Koolau the Leper," in which Hawaiian and white men are infected with leprosy and experience the same horror and banishment; much to their surprise, the whites' race does not protect them from the disease.[70] Thurston reprinted excerpts from a letter London had written him, in which London asks, "Is the Territory of Hawaii to become part of the Twentieth Century world, or is it to remain provincial, like any backwoods settlement? . . . ["The Bystander"] sells his wit and the *Advertiser* buys, because it considers his wit is modern, worthwhile and up-to-date" (*Letters*, 859). London jabs Thurston with one of the worst "American" insults to residents of Hawai'i: that they are behind the times. However, he uses the arguments of justice and brotherhood to remind Thurston of the "height of hospitality" he received in Hawai'i, which "cannot be excelled anywhere else on earth" (859–60). On June 11, 1910, London wrote again to "Dear Kakina"—Thurston's Hawaiian nickname—in response to an article of Thurston's published on May 22, finding himself "inclined to pessimism" by the "spectacle of you and me, both honest and sincere, yet unable to understand each other on an impersonal question." To the charge of writing "morbid" stories, he wrote, "As well might I call you morbid because you exploit murder and arson, conjugal infidelity and infamy, in the columns of your newspaper."[71] He further noted:

> Perhaps your lack of understanding is due to the fact that, your mental processes being muddied by local patriotism, you fail to apprehend the question at issue. The question at issue is really literature. What constitutes a short story, or the stuff of a short story? Go over the great short stories that are classics, and you will find that they deal, ninety-nine times out of a hundred, with the terrible and tragic. (*Letters*, 901)

London concludes, "And you certainly think less of humanity than I do" (*Letters*, 902), insisting no matter what the fallout upon his right as an author to create what he will.[72] If the *Snark* cruise had taught London anything, it was that provincialism and narrow-mindedness about the world and its peoples was the false refuge of the ignorant or the self-interested (902–903).

The first of London's Hawaiian short stories was the title story, "The House of Pride," the tale of how missionary descendent Percival Ford betrays his illegitimate half-brother, Joe Garland, forcing him to leave Hawai'i. It was completed in early July 1907, only six weeks after he arrived, but it was turned

down by nearly twenty magazines over three years.[73] *Pacific Monthly*, which declined the story once, eventually published it in December 1910, paying London $267. Neither of his usual overseas agencies, James B. Pinker and William Heinemann & Co., could sell the story at all. Such difficulty getting published was very unusual for London at that point in his career, as he was one of the top-selling and most highly paid fiction writers of his day. In contrast, a melodramatic, formulaic crime story of a gruesome double murder, "'Just Meat,'" was sent to *Cosmopolitan* August 29, 1906, and was accepted on September 1, then published in the March 1907 number, paying London $641.17 from *Cosmopolitan* and £20 from Heinemann.[74]

Given that "The House of Pride" is as well-written as any of London's tales, the problem magazine editors had with it most likely lay in its attack on racism and critique of American colonial exploitation in Hawai'i, a stance not at all popular in the States and one that would have puzzled many London fans. Here, as in the subsequent Hawaiian stories, London presents Hawaiian characters not as nostalgic noble savages from an exotic past, nor as friendly faces of burgeoning Hawaiian tourism, but as modern people with conflicted identities, experiences of marginalization, and other postcolonial effects. They are people with histories, with rich inner and outer lives and specific experiences of social, racial, cultural, and economic transitions, of ethnic diasporas, of conflicting loyalties and disloyalties. They represent a wide variety of points of view, ethnic, class, and gender, as well as personality, values, and goals. Even though London was no colonialist, he was, after all, seen on the mainland as a roaming icon of Americanism, the "Kipling of the Klondike," the "Anglo-Saxon" author of "The Yellow Peril" (1904). The Hawaiian stories didn't fit this popular image; their interrogation of racial categories, portrayals of admirable moral stances by nonwhite characters, and oppositional politics meant they could not be read as local color, and they did not satirize Hawaiians as Twain had done in *Roughing It* (1872) a generation earlier.

Indeed, "The House of Pride" marked a major shift in London's fiction, and it should have worried magazine editors, since it amounted to an attack upon popular American beliefs concerning family obligations, religion, race, nationalism, and imperialism. In "The House of Pride" missionary descendant Percival Ford's bitter rejection of his Hawaiian half-brother, Joe Garland, and also of his father, Isaac Ford, symbolizes his rejection of humanity itself, and makes him as negative, racist, and morally bankrupt a character as any London ever

drew, certainly more negative than even the most self-aggrandizing Klondike "Son of the Wolf":

> Percival Ford was no more a woman's man than he was a man's man. A glance at him told the reason. . . . [H]e lacked vitality. His was a negative organism. No blood with a ferment in it could have nourished and shaped that long and narrow face, those thin lips, lean cheeks, and the small, sharp eyes. The thatch of hair, dust-colored, straight and sparse, advertised the niggard soil, as did the nose, thin, delicately modeled, and just hinting the suggestion of a beak. His meagre blood had denied him much of life, and permitted him to be an extremist in one thing only, which thing was righteousness. (*Stories*, 1346)

Ford's friend, appropriately a doctor, sees his spiritual disease. Chastising him for his "persecution" of Joe Garland, he can hardly believe that while everyone else knows the real history of Ford's outwardly pious father, Isaac Ford, and his out-of-wedlock son, Joe Garland, Ford still pretends ignorance:

> "You are pure New England stock. Joe Garland is half Kanaka. Your blood is thin. His is warm. Life is one thing to you, another thing to him. He laughs and sings and dances through life, genial, unselfish, childlike, everybody's friend. You go through life like a perambulating prayer-wheel, a friend of nobody but the righteous, and the righteous are those who agree with you as to what is right. . . . You live like an anchorite. Joe Garland lives like a good fellow. Who has extracted the most from life? We are paid to live, you know." (*Stories*, 1346)

The doctor knows that Ford's problem lies not in his ancestry and his physical frame but in his prideful spirit, emasculated by malice. Ford's true feeling toward his brother is not racist outrage but envy. Ford believes he upholds the strongest religious, racial, and familial standards, but his lack of self-awareness surfaces everywhere, as in his sexual anxieties, whether disgust at women (he salaciously spies on women's "challenging femaleness" and "essential grossness of flesh" at the army base dance, *Stories*, 1345) or disgust at Garland's lively sexuality with women. His obsession with his father—the symbol of his racial ancestry—gives rise to his greatest denial. In one of the few critical essays to treat this story, Lawrence I. Berkove makes a case for viewing Ford as a total failure as a man.[75]

Racial tropes in this story were both timely and challenging. The first and most significant is the denial of humanity to the racial Other coupled with

rejection of the "tainted" family member who calls into question one's own status. There is also the element of the racial Other paying for the racial transgressions of the white. While Ford fixates on the "crime" of miscegenation, the reader instead focuses upon Ford's own crime of denying his brother, blindly following a master/slave dichotomy that will not admit human feelings or kinship. The doctor asks Ford, "'Who the devil gave it to you to be judge and jury? Does landlordism give you control of the immortal souls of those that toil for you?'" (*Stories*, 1346). The story can be compared with other plots of rejection of family members based on racism such as Twain's *Puddn'head Wilson* (1894), Kate Chopin's "Desiree's Baby" (1897), or Charles Chesnutt's *The Marrow of Tradition* (1901).

For Ford, learning of his father's "unruly blood" is "like learning suddenly that his father had been a leper and that his own blood might bear the taint of that dread disease. Isaac Ford, the austere soldier of the Lord—the old hypocrite! What difference between him and any beach-comber? The house of pride that Percival Ford had builded was tumbling about his ears" (*Stories*, 1353–54). The twin stereotypes many whites held about Pacific peoples, that tropical "natives" carried disease on the one hand and sexual allure on the other, are here conjoined with Percival's scorn toward a white father who would "cross the beach," that is, join with a "native" community in the form of a woman, and hence risk "contaminating" his white family.[76]

In the end, his heart shriveled by prejudice, Ford pays off and banishes his brother. Despite the stereotypes attached to Garland ("He laughs and sings and dances through life"), the story makes its point about prejudice and racism within definitions of identity and home though, as London observes, the doctor is careful to note that Garland is no saint, recounting his drinking and smuggling escapades, but he also recalls that Garland helped Ford endure hazing at school, saving him from repeatedly being held underwater in the pool by other boys. As Loudermilk observes, Garland's "role as representative of the native Hawaiian" occupies only a "liminal" space in the story," and he is "defined by things that he is only in halves—half white, half Hawaiian, a half brother to Percival Ford."[77] But why does Garland capitulate? If he shows Christlike patience with his brother and agrees out of misplaced respect for him to follow his wishes, he somehow will rise above his doom and remain himself, morally uncolonized by his evil twin. From Arthurian romance London borrowed the name Percival, the foolish knight who, upon witnessing the Grail procession, fails to ask the right question; had he been able to ask it, the answer would have cured the

Fisher King. As described by Chrétien de Troyes and later in Sir Thomas Malory's *L'Morte d'Arthur*, Percival is a figure of failed Christianity due to ignorance and moral irresponsibility.[78] (Evil "Percivals" also appear in London's "In a Far Country" and "Goliah.") With the name Garland London runs the risk of stereotyping Garland as a noble savage or as a merely romantic character. But Garland seems less romanticized than at the mercy of the cold, determining forces of capitalism, colonialism, and racism as much as any of Zola's or Norris's naturalistically doomed characters. While Garland resembles a romantic hero, especially in his self-sacrifice, he is not allowed to become one; accompanying these traditional literary images and stereotypes is London's modern psychological, even Freudian, dissection of Ford's disturbed mind and the effects of his identity crisis on Garland.[79] In his acquiescence Garland is unmanned as far as Ford is concerned, if from the narrator's point of view he seems a model of manly forbearance. But in Darwinian evolutionary terms, Garland has succeeded where Ford has failed; Ford will never, one is sure, pass on his genes, for he will not adapt to the reality around him, as Garland has and will.[80]

In the most famous story of the collection, "Koolau the Leper," London offers his version of the famous leper of Kaua'i who defied the authorities and remained in his beloved Kalalau Valley until his death from leprosy. Bert Stolz, a crewman on the *Snark*, was the son of Louis Stolz, sheriff of Kaua'i. Sheriff Stolz was the man Koolau shot and killed during the several attempts by the authorities to capture Koolau, his wife Pi'ilani, and their son and take them to Moloka'i. Koolau's story is still widely known in Hawai'i today. With both her son and husband dead from leprosy, Pi'ilani buried them and performed the necessary rituals and slowly made her way out of the valley and back to Waimea. She eventually dictated her story to a local man named Glen Sheldon, and many years later Frances Frazier translated it and published it in English as *The True Story of Kaluaikoolau* (2001). W. S. Merwin based his epic poem, *Folding Cliffs: A Narrative* (1998), on the legend. London's version eschews the point of view of Pi'ilani and her religious allegory in favor of narrating a political, revolutionary tale of the triumph of Koolau. The hero remarks, "They came like lambs, speaking softly. . . . They were of two kinds. The one kind asked permission, our gracious permission, to preach to us the word of God. The other kind asked our permission, our gracious permission, to trade with us. That was the beginning. Today all the islands are theirs, all the land, all the cattle—everything is theirs." Also theirs is the "rotting sickness" of civilization, the leprosy that has reduced Koolau and his rebellious band to hideous

monsters with stumps for arms and gaping holes for faces: "The sickness is not ours. We have not sinned. The men who preached the word of God and the word of Rum brought the sickness with the coolie slaves who work the stolen land," and if a Kanaka objects, he is told to get to work (*Stories*, 1441). Though Koolau is as ravaged by leprosy as any of his companions, London endows him with nobility and avoids caricature, in large part, says Loudermilk, through "subtle use of Christian mythology, rhetoric, and diction" in the language of the King James Bible to give Koolau "the full range of positive connotations" for readers. London often uses King James English for nonwhite characters. In "Koolau the Leper," this technique conveys great meaning in a few words and "features the apparently incongruous elevation of the speech of 'natives' to a highly formal and antiquated, or biblical register." It also allows Koolau to make prophetic utterances "that rarely mark regular speech, in order to accentuate the sense of crisis and urgency." She concludes, "With Koolau's death, London is explicit about the inevitable result of cultural intersection that becomes power struggle. The inability or refusal to respect the racial other yields an unbridgeable gap in which acts of violence continually erupt."[81]

The hero of "Chun Ah Chun," based on the well-known successful Chinese merchant Ah Fong of Honolulu, is also outside the pale. The sons of the white families in Honolulu reject his mixed-race daughters as potential wives. Expressing what Loudermilk calls the story's lesson of "the fluidity of identity," the "unqualified success" of the racial blending of Ah Chun's children reflects beauty in a new concept of race:[82]

> As beauties, the Ah Chun girls were something new. Nothing like them had been seen before. They resembled nothing so much as they resembled one another, and yet each girl was sharply individual. There was no mistaking one for another. . . . Maud, who was blue-eyed and yellow-haired, would remind one instantly of Henrietta, an olive brunette with large, languishing dark eyes and hair that was blue-black. The hint of resemblance that ran through them all, reconciling every differentiation, was Ah Chun's contribution. He had furnished the groundwork upon which had been traced the blended patterns of the races. He had furnished the slim-boned Chinese frame upon which had been builded the delicacies and subtleties of Saxon, Latin, and Polynesian flesh.[83]

Soon Ah Chun discovers that large dowries result in marriages for his daughters, and, after they are all married off and living their *haole* American lives, which he finds he does not wish to share—as opposed to cannot share—he

sells his possessions and retires to Macao. When he is refused a room en route at a posh hotel in Hong Kong, he simply buys the hotel. Ah Chun defeats the terms of exile on his own terms with his personal and cultural sense of identity intact, and his inner peace. He eschews a purely Chinese identity just as he avoided an "American" identity—by choosing to live not in China but in Macao, a place of racial mixing like Honolulu, he finds his own home. He writes wise letters to his daughters urging them to stop fighting over money, with "admirable texts and precepts" to help his family "to live in unity and harmony" (*Stories*, 1466).

"Aloha Oe" tells another story of exile again due to racial intolerance, but this time "outside the marriage pale" (*Stories*, 1471). Stephen Knight, an admirable young half-Hawaiian man, meets Dorothy Stambrooke, visiting daughter of a U.S. senator. They fall in love, but because Knight is a "hapa-haole" (of mixed blood), her father forbids their relationship. White men may take Hawaiian wives, but not the other way around: "He could have dinner with her and her father, dance with her, and be a member of the entertainment committee; but because there was tropic sunshine in his veins he could not marry her." The story ends with her dockside departure and attempt to take off her lei to throw to him. When she cannot untangle the lei from her pure white pearls, "She deliberately snapped the string, and, amid a shower of pearls, the flowers fell to the waiting lover" (1473).[84] As in the later stories "The House of Mapuhi" and "The Pearls of Parlay," the pearl is an important image of faith in the South Seas stories, as the pearl of great price. But in this modern Honolulu story the choking pearls symbolize white wealth and racial purity. Loudermilk see similarities between Senator Jeremy Stambrooke and Percival Ford, as each represents U.S. interests in Hawai'i; Senator Stambrooke's junketing party spends a month being "wined and dined, surfeited with statistics and dragged up volcanic hill and down lava dale to behold the glories and resources of Hawaii" (1467), which Loudermilk sees as "an extension of American governmental endorsement of the plundering of those resources by . . . white Americans." She also draws the parallel of their poor physical condition and lack of vitality: Stambrooke is "overweight and unattractive," and he even hates the flowers placed around his neck as Ford hates the dancers he observes. Stambrooke's point of view is mercenary, seeing the islands through "a statistical eye that saw none of the beauty, but that peered into the labor power, the factories, the railroads, and the plantations" (1468). But appearances rule the day, and, appropriately, "Aloha Oe," comments Loudermilk, "is a story that

both begins and ends with departure," so that "the impossibility of Stephen and Dorothy's relationship mirrors the impossibility of the survival of the old ways as they clash with the new interests in Hawai'i."[85]

LIGHT AND DARK IN *SOUTH SEA TALES* (1911)

The stories of *South Sea Tales* were written from March through October 1908. From the first, "The Seed of McCoy," to the last, "The Inevitable White Man," they concern themselves with the intrusion of the whites into the Pacific islands, but in many cases, as the islanders are besieged, the whites are also brutally dealt with. What London observed of blackbirding on the *Minota* in 1908—Western companies using local workers kidnapped from other islands and held on "work contracts"—inspired some of his most naturalistic tales. As Riedl and Tietze observe, the "darkest side to the colonial enterprise" was labor recruiting by "small bands of generally ruthless rascals in small vessels, cruising the coastal shores throughout the South Pacific." Over the decades, eventually tens of thousands of Solomon Islanders were captured, sometimes sold by their own kin, sometimes terrorized into "volunteering" to work on the cane or copra plantations.[86] Recruiters like Captain Jansen of the *Minota* made a lot of money, though they were attacked and even killed by angry islanders. A labor "recruit" typically served four years on a plantation for the sum of six pounds a year for the arduous work of clearing jungle, planting crops, harvesting coconuts, and drying the copra. Not surprisingly, this engendered resentment on the part of the islanders, whose "culture had never taught them the spartan European virtues of providing service through backbreaking work for foreign bosses"—and for virtually no reward—as Riedl and Tietze observe.[87]

To make matters worse, companies found it difficult to get reliable white management because of isolation, low pay, and dangerous conditions. Many times managers could only be found among the dregs of society, drunk, debauched, and cruel. And furthermore, even if they had been fit when they arrived, as Lawrence Phillips has noted, colonization in the South Seas worked "to decivilize the colonizer." With this in mind, he concludes, London's Pacific fiction "fails miserably as an exemplar to underpin an argument for racial hierarchy and superiority."[88] Missionaries arrived beginning with the Portuguese and Spanish in the sixteenth century, and rivalries soon developed among different British and New England Protestant denominations and between Protestants and Catholics for the souls of both the islanders and the

newcomer whites, but like sailors and traders, missionaries brought diseases and social problems previously unknown to the Natives. In sum, as Riedl and Tietze put it, "Whenever the white men came to exploit the people or resources or to save their immortal souls, tragedy seemed inevitably to result from the meeting of the races." By the time London sailed, "the Pacific region had been in racial turmoil for three hundred years."[89] If the stories of *South Sea Tales* portray islanders' violence, they also reveal "the weird brutality that has everywhere accompanied European efforts to 'civilize' the remote corners of the world," replacing the popular figure of the Noble Savage and the Kiplingesque white roamer, "whose excellences only further distanced magazine readers from the real people who lived on these remote islands." London shows "the islanders as individuals who had to deal, in one way or another, with their own problems and with white intrusions including inhumane legal and labor systems, foreign diseases, and racist social practices. Throughout, these tales stab, with an irony born of conviction, at the comfortable paternalism of whites over people of color."[90] Yet as a naturalist London had "to maintain at least the emotive pose of objectivity," his stance thus "consistently evenhanded, showing us the islanders as he found them and pulling no punches, in the same way that he describes the crimes of the white invaders." Yet, even "[i]f there are few heroes" in *South Seas Tales*, "all of them happen to be islanders."[91] In "The Inevitable White Man" and "The Terrible Solomons," London's whites are certainly not heroic, no matter how they shout their imperialistic and racist ideologies. In the first story a pub owner comments: "Half the trouble is the stupidity of the whites. . . . If the white man would lay himself out a bit to understanding the workings of the black man's mind, most of the messes could be avoided" (*Stories*, 1557). If London admired the adventuring Anglo-Saxon throughout his life, the same Anglo-Saxon's lack of imagination and failure to learn about the ways of diverse peoples were not things that London either practiced or admired.[92]

"The Heathen" is based on *Snark* crew member Tehei, named Otoo in the story, perhaps a reference to Melville's *Omoo* (1847). Otoo sacrifices his life for his white friend Charley, a drunkard who wanders about taking odd jobs. As Riedl and Tietze observe, Charley initially subscribes to the idea that whiteness "is a short-hand term for fairness, loyalty, and trustworthiness." For example, he calls a man named Ah Choon "'the whitest Chinese I have ever known.'" But the tale deconstructs this stable understanding "as it ironically offers example after example of white men's failings."[95] After their ship is wrecked,

Charley saves Otoo's life when another white man refuses to share a flotsam raft with a "heathen": Charley shouts, "'For two centimes I'd come over there and drown you, you white beast!'" (*Stories*, 1507). Charley and Otoo become blood brothers, and Otoo works to reform Charley from his own white beastliness and to find prosperity and sobriety. Charley calls Otoo a better Christian than any of the whites, and when Charley is attacked by a shark, Otoo saves him at the cost of his own life. Tietze and Riedl see "[t]he story of their mutual love" as being "touching without being sentimental" in its "case study of interracial friendship. In sacrificing his life to save Charley . . . Otoo displays a heroism that impresses Charley—and us—as the act of a loving friend, not as the toadying gesture of a racial inferior."[94] Modern readers may find the story overly sentimental and stereotypical in Otoo as a noble savage who comes uncomfortably close to the stereotype of the loyal darky, but Tietze and Riedl emphasize that the story "would have offended most of the reading public by depicting a relationship that seemed morally improper and politically subversive." The Anton Fischer frontispiece to the book shows, as they note, a "ragged, brutish, slumping white man walking at the side of a more admirably postured black man; at first glance, it actually seems they're walking hand-in-hand"—though Otoo like Tehei is a Bora-Boran, Fischer Africanizes him in the drawing.[95] "'Why do you "master" me?'" Charley demands at one point: "'We have exchanged names. To you I am Otoo. To me you are Charley. And between you and me, forever and forever, you shall be Charley, and I Otoo. It is the way of the custom'" (*Stories*, 1508–09). Their exchange of names or totems is an outgrowth of London's earlier imaginary of the Son of the Wolf and the Natives, but instead of white dominance here there is an even exchange.

"The Seed of McCoy" is based on the tale of a descendant of one of the *Bounty* mutineers. Pitcairn's helmsman and chief magistrate is summoned aboard a ship whose hold, loaded with wheat, has caught fire. The decks grow hotter as the fire smolders, and the crew panic. McCoy, with his intimate knowledge of surrounding reefs and harbors and Christlike composure, seems their only hope. He agrees to help the ship find safe harbor but explains that he can pilot the ship, but the crew and captain must steer her to safety. Bringing food and solace aboard, McCoy's "liquid brown eyes [sweep] over them like a benediction, soothing them, wrapping them in a mantle of great peace" (*Stories*, 1358). His mysterious faith prevails despite threats of mutiny and suicide, and the crew find themselves safe in harbor. McCoy's beachcomber appearance masks what Tietze and Riedl describe as his "truly magical power to control

others." Ironically, his British heritage is revealed as hardly the stuff of white superiority as he relates the "brutality and murder that followed the mutiny, [in which] white men [were] exposed as the true savages on Pitcairn." The racialist's horror of inbreeding is here reversed: McCoy's Polynesian blood has tamed "the violent white blood" of his British forebears.[96]

"The Whale Tooth" is a trickster tale of a foolish missionary who inadvertently engineers his own death. Starhurst (another Melvillean reference?) wanders too far into the bush against the advice of the seacoast chief he has already unsuccessfully attempted to convert. He dies in the cooking fire praying for "poor cannibal Fiji." This is another case in which the problem between races is failure to understand each other's language, for, not realizing its import, Starhurst carries a carved whale tooth from village to village, which he thinks is a special passport that makes him special to the natives. However, its real meaning as a signifier is known to everyone but him; it means the bearer will be served at a cannibal feast. When he reaches the last village, all are assembled to cook him.

"The Chinago" and "Mauki," written a few months apart in 1908, are powerful racial stories.[97] In the first, the barrier of language condemns to death the innocent *chinago*, or Chinese plantation worker, while in the second the barrier of white skin turns out not to be the best means of practicing lordship over a slave worker. King Hendricks called "The Chinago" "the greatest story of London's career," with its "building of an atmosphere, the telling of a narrative, and the development of irony."[98] Its first and last sentences address knowledge ("Ah Cho did not understand French" and "That much he knew before he ceased to know," *Stories*, 1405, 1417). The story presents understanding as limited by cultural and linguistic ignorance. Knowledge in this tale is either wrong—despite the central motif of the murder as a way to find out truth—misinterpreted, or deliberately covered up. As he sits in the courtroom, Ah Cho, who has been falsely charged with murder, muses, "There was no understanding these white devils. . . . There was no telling what went on at the back of their minds. . . . They grew angry without apparent cause, and their anger was always dangerous. They were like wild beasts at such times. There was a curtain behind the eyes of the white devils that screened the backs of their minds" (1408–09). In addition to English, Riedl and Tietze point out, seven other languages appear in the story, from the court proceedings in "unceasing, explosive French" to the various dialects spoken by the workers. "Universal misinterpretation and confusion" instead of understanding means

that instead of trying to find the real murderer, who is another Chinago, Ah Chow, the authorities identify Ah Cho arbitrarily; after they have all been beaten, after three weeks Ah Chow's marks are still unhealed and so he is the one marked to die. Ah Cho receives only twenty years in the penal colony on New Caledonia. But through another series of interpretive mistakes, Ah Cho is mistaken for Ah Chow and taken to the guillotine. That linguistic confusion twice condemns Ah Cho makes London's irony inescapable.[99]

"Mauki," the most compelling story in the volume, was finished on October 8, 1908. Rejected by a number of editors, it was finally published in *Hampton's Magazine* in late 1909 because the owner and editor, Benjamin B. Hampton, was a sympathizer with socialism and, according to Riedl and Tietze, "was confident that there was profit to be made" in such muck-raking "accounts of social injustices." For Hampton, "Mauki" exposed the capitalistic and imperialistic atrocities the socialists were most concerned about.[100] Yet "Mauki" has been neglected by critics not because of its obscure socialistic themes, but because of its pulp style and inflammatory racial content. In the 1970s Earle Labor described London's portrayal of "the immoral stupidities of the white race in its treatment of darker-skinned peoples," but few critics since have looked at "Mauki" with this in mind.[101] In his study of London's short fiction, for example, James I. McClintock did not find much to admire: "Obviously, perverse sensationalism of the stag-magazine variety had replaced London's earlier interest in ordeal and primitivism as elements in a ritual of self-definition."[102]

But "Mauki" deserves close attention for its satire of racism in which the victor is an oppressed Malaitan boy and the loser a strongman German boss. As Tietze and Riedl, two of the few critics who have commented on "Mauki," note, it is deliberate in its racial transgressions: "London possessed a largeness of mind and heart incompatible with the crassness, narrowness, and ignorance of the white invaders he wrote about." His stories "forced white middle-class magazine readers to sympathize with, and vicariously share the experiences of, [a] heroic non-white character." If "Mauki" is a "horrific picture of white supremacy," its protagonist turns it into a "tale of revenge" and a "grimly inspirational tribute to indomitable independence."[103] Mauki's tale also owes something to London's interest in the slave narrative, as in *The Call of the Wild*, as well as to his experiences on Malaita.

After getting lost, the *Snark* crew eventually found Lord Howe Atoll (now Ontong Java) and stayed at the home of a local white trader. Lying ill with fever, London had been entertained by tales of the crimes of their host's young

Malaitan cook, Mauki, so he met and talked with Mauki.[104] As an indentured servant, Mauki was serving sentences for committing various crimes, including murder, theft, and escape. The trader made a regular practice of beating Mauki and other servants, and showed off the graves of his three former wives, whom he also beat, just as he still beat his present three wives for not making copra fast enough.[105]

Charmian remarks on the disparity between the cook's crimes—"murders, escapes in handcuffs, thefts of whaleboats—a history of bloodcurdling crimes and reprisals too long to go into," with his "mild" face and even "deceptive weak prettiness."[106] The opening description of Mauki suggests the racial tensions that inform the story but also, with a more subtle point of view, a deeper layer of identity than usually meets the Western eye:

> He weighed one hundred and ten pounds. His hair was kinky and negroid, and he was black. He was peculiarly black. He was neither blue-black nor purple-black, but plum-black. His name was Mauki, and he was the son of a chief. He had three *tambos*. *Tambo* is Melanesian for *taboo*, and is first cousin to that Polynesian word. Mauki's three *tambos* were as follows: first, he must never shake hands with a woman, nor have a woman's hand touch him or any of his personal belongings; secondly, he must never eat clams nor any food from a fire in which clams had been cooked; thirdly, he must never touch a crocodile, nor travel in a canoe that carried any part of a crocodile even if as large as a tooth.
>
> Of a different black were his teeth, which were deep black, or, perhaps better, *lamp*-black. They had been made so in a single night, by his mother, who had compressed about them a powdered mineral which was dug from the landslide back of Port Adams. Port Adams is a salt-water village on Malaita, and Malaita is the most savage island in the Solomons—so savage that no traders nor planters have yet gained a foothold on it; while, from the time of the earliest béche-de-mer fishers and sandalwood traders down to the latest labor recruiters equipped with automatic rifles and gasolene [sic] engines, scores of white adventurers have been passed out by tomahawks and soft-nosed Snider bullets. So Malaita remains to-day, in the twentieth century, the stamping ground of the labor recruiters, who farm its coasts for laborers who engage and contract themselves to toil on the plantations of the neighboring and more civilized islands for a wage of thirty dollars a year. (*Stories*, 1532)

Mauki's nose, lips, and ears are pierced to hold a china teacup handle and other objects of trade, marking him as a strong village leader to his own people, but

making him look only more "backward" to white observers, both slavers in the Pacific and readers back home, both of whom are wrong about Mauki. London thus begins his tale with a hint at how it will end. By giving us both outsiders' and insiders' views of Mauki, almost like a camera lens changing its focus from distant to near fields, the narrator suggests that surfaces can be deceiving, and that it is the inner life and not the surface that is important, which cannot be "removed."

For the white magazine reader Mauki was the epitome of savagery, his blackness extending all the way to his teeth—not unlike the eponymous hero's hysterical descriptions of black south Atlantic islanders in Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1850). The word "black" appears eight times in London's two short opening paragraphs. Few white readers would grasp the cultural significance of Mauki's black teeth—they were blackened deliberately by his mother to show his nobility and fierceness—and would not understand the importance of his *tambos* at all, although they are the key to Mauki's identity and the source of his power. Mauki is introduced in a nonjudgmental tone, yet underneath, as Riedl and Tietze claim, lies a subtext in which "London is not only recording his hero's skin color—he is reveling in it, rubbing his magazine readers' noses in it, refusing to give them a main character they could imaginatively distort into the more comfortable cliché of the handsome (read light-skinned) Noble Savage." In the face of racialist stereotypes, London "manages to create a hero." He does so by making available two competing points of view, with the real interest located in the hidden subjectivity of Mauki's true identity, his own internal ethics.[107]

Another critical piece of information about Mauki that cannot be casually "seen" is that he is "by birth a salt-water man, . . . half amphibian. He knew the way of the fishes and oysters, and the reef was an open book to him. Canoes, also, he knew. He learned to swim when he was a year old. At seven years he could hold his breath a full minute and swim straight down to bottom through thirty feet of water" (*Stories*, 1533). Mauki's connection to the sea, especially his ability with canoes, is important later in the story. As in "The Water Baby," here the sea is identified with a cosmic, unconscious, spiritual realm of life and renewal. But unfortunately also at the age of seven Mauki is stolen by the bushmen, becomes the slave of Fanfoa, far from the sea of his birth. Fanfoa is "head chief over a score of scattered bush-villages on the range-lips of Malaita, the smoke of which, on calm mornings, is about the only evidence the seafaring white men have of the teeming interior population. For the whites do not

penetrate Malaita. They tried it once, in the days when the search was on for gold, but they always left their heads behind to grin from the smoky rafters of the bushmen's huts" (1533–34).

Beginning with his kidnapping, a pattern is established in which Mauki is an innocent victim who desires only his freedom and his return to his home, while everyone around him is his enemy. This is illustrated when Fanfoa sells Mauki to labor recruiters in exchange for tobacco. Mauki is frightened of the white men who are now his owners; the narrator calls him "a lamb led to the slaughter." In an echo of the mocking of Christ, one of the first things that happens to him is that the men tear "the long feather from Mauki's hair, cut that same hair short," and wrap him in "a lava-lava of bright yellow calico" (*Stories*, 1534).

Mauki escapes but is caught, with penalty years added to his three-year servitude with each attempt. On New Georgia he is starved and overworked, cutting trees, smoking copra, clearing new fields, building roads. He learns Bêche-de-Mer English, the South Seas patois, "with which he could talk with all white men, and with all recruits who otherwise would have talked in a thousand different dialects."[108] He observes that white men usually keep their word: "If they told a boy he was going to receive a stick of tobacco, he got it. If they told a boy they would knock seven bells out of him if he did a certain thing, when he did that thing seven bells invariably were knocked out of him." Even when the white men were drunk, "as they were frequently, they never struck unless a rule had been broken" (*Stories*, 1535–36). This ability to observe and learn new "languages" while in captivity is a feature of American slave narrative, and as in those narratives Mauki benefits from his alertness. He has erred, however, in inferring the characteristics of all white men from a few.

After ten years of servitude Mauki realizes that he hates plantation work: after all, "he was the son of a chief" (*Stories*, 1536), homesick even for his slavery under Fanfoa. He runs away and is caught yet again, finally winding up on Guadalcanal. After he is made a houseboy he gets good food and easy work cleaning for the white men and serving them whiskey and beer, and he realizes that he likes the easy life. And yet:

> [H]e liked Port Adams more. He had two years longer to serve, but two years were too long for him in the throes of homesickness. He had grown wiser with his year of service, and, being now a house-boy, he had opportunity. He had the cleaning of the rifles, and he knew where the key to the store-room was hung.

> He planned the escape, and one night ten Malaita boys and one boy from San Cristoval sneaked from the barracks and dragged one of the whale-boats down to the beach. It was Mauki who supplied the key that opened the padlock on the boat, and it was Mauki who equipped the boat with a dozen Winchesters, an immense amount of ammunition, a case of dynamite with detonators and fuse, and ten cases of tobacco. (*Stories*, 1536)

As someone who can learn from experience and continue to strive for his freedom, Mauki has been able to profit by being inside the white men's house, learning their language and secrets, but they have not been watching him as closely. Mauki's decision to escape is ostensibly puzzling: he only has two more years to go, and he is in a good situation. He has reason to distrust the white men's "contracts," but it is his inner drive for freedom and his belief in himself as a person of importance in the world that spur him to try to return home. A lesser man would have stayed and waited, maintaining the mindset of an obedient slave. Like Buck in *The Call of the Wild* Mauki becomes the author of his slave narrative and of his destiny. As the northwest monsoon blows, the escapees sail south at night.

> Thus they gained Guadalcanar, skirted halfway along it, and crossed the Indispensable Straits to Florida Island. It was here that they killed the San Cristoval boy, saving his head and cooking and eating the rest of him. The Malaita coast was only twenty miles away, but the last night a strong current and baffling winds prevented them from gaining across. Daylight found them still several miles from their goal. But daylight brought a cutter, in which were two white men, who were not afraid of eleven Malaita men armed with twelve rifles. (*Stories*, 1536–37)

Mauki and his companions are carried to Tulagi, where he is beaten, fined, and sent back to New Georgia, but this time not as a houseboy; he is put on the road-building team, and another eighteen months are added to his sentence. After further escape attempts, the Moongleam Soap Company deems him incorrigible: "'We'll send him to Lord Howe,' said Mr. Haveby. 'Bunster is there, and we'll let them settle it between them. It will be a case, imagine, of Mauki getting Bunster, or Bunster getting Mauki, and good riddance in either event'" (*Stories*, 1538).

Before following Mauki to Lord Howe, we must consider the murder and cannibalism of the San Cristoval boy. If Mauki can be said to have an ethic of

freedom, as I suggest, then this act of betrayal and consuming another human's flesh is consistent with that ethic. Certainly one agrees with Tommo that the Typeeans' cannibalism is "a rather bad trait in their character";[109] however it was established cultural practice in Mauki's world to kill and sometimes cannibalize those who are not of your tribe. It is not necessary for readers to approve of what Mauki does, even if it is pointed out that the boys were starving and ate one crew member to save the rest. One need not approve, but within Mauki's internal code of ethics he has done no wrong—he is true to his code. Because his code is not necessarily the reader's, the reader is invited to consider that codes may be relative, but they are not up for judgment in the story, though whether one upholds an ethical code is. The whites in the story operate on greed rather than on a discernable ethical code. Mauki's code has resulted in an act considered monstrous by outsiders, but it is a code that, in its own realm, maintains the ethic of community. Furthermore, in Darwinian terms, it is an adaptive mechanism reflecting kin preference, common, of course, to all societies.

The narrator tells us that "Nobody ever comes to Lord Howe. . . . Thomas Cook & Son do not sell tickets to it, and tourists do not dream of its existence. Not even a white missionary has landed on its shore" (*Stories*, 1539). Its history is particularly bloody. After early white traders were killed by the inhabitants of Lord Howe, more white men with bigger ships arrived:

> They sailed their vessels right into the lagoon and proceeded to preach the white man's gospel that only white men shall kill white men and that the lesser breeds must keep hands off. . . . There was no escape from the narrow sand-circle, no bush to which to flee. The men were shot down at sight, and there was no avoiding being sighted. The villages were burned, the canoes smashed, the chickens and pigs killed, and the precious cocoanut-trees chopped down. . . . [T]he fear of the white man had been seared into the souls of the islanders and never again were they rash enough to harm one. (*Stories*, 1539)

The point of view in describing this seeming triumph of the "inevitable white man" is not from his perspective but from that of the islanders, and so when Mauki arrives Max Bunster is explained to him as the one white man on Lord Howe, "a strapping big German, with something wrong in his brain. Semi-madness would be a charitable statement of his condition. He was a bully and a coward, and a thrice-bigger savage than any savage on the island" (*Stories*, 1539). Mauki learns that upon first arriving, Bunster got drunk and killed an

islander who beat him at wrestling, after Bunster promised a case of tobacco to anyone who could best him: "And so began Bunster's reign on Lord Howe. Three thousand people lived in the principal village; but it was deserted, even in broad day, when he passed through. Men, women, and children fled before him. Even the dogs and pigs got out of the way, while the king was not above hiding under a mat" (1539–40).

From this episode the reader learns not only that Bunster is a monster but that he does not keep his word, and indeed that he has no "word" to give because he has no inner sense of ethics. Yet Mauki's initial error on Lord Howe is also one of judging racialized behavior: he "had no idea of the sort of master he was to work for. He had had no warnings, and he had concluded as a matter of course that Bunster would be like other white men, a drinker of much whiskey, a ruler and a lawgiver who always kept his word and who never struck a boy undeserved." Bunster has the advantage: "He knew all about Mauki, and gloated over the coming into possession of him." Mauki is to toil for eight and a half years, and, unlike his previous plantations, "[t]here was no escaping from Lord Howe. For better or worse, Bunster and he were tied together. Bunster weighed two hundred pounds. Mauki weighed one hundred and ten. Bunster was a degenerate brute. But Mauki was a primitive savage. . . . [B]oth had wills and ways of their own" (*Stories*, 1540). This description hints that "wills and ways" rather than body weight will decide the victor. A "degenerate," as it turns out, is not as good as being a "primitive," particularly in a "primitive" environment.

In much of London's work the white "abysmal brute" stands for purity of nature as opposed to the degrading forces of civilization, memorably in "The Night-Born" and *The Abysmal Brute* (1913). But as Mauki possesses a primitive love of freedom and "savage" resistance, he soon also repeatedly demonstrates his own "brutish" adaptability, learning through observation what he is up against. He learns that "there were white men and white men. On the very day the schooner departed he was ordered to buy a chicken from Samisee, the native Tongan missionary. But Samisee had sailed across the lagoon and would not be back for three days. Mauki returned with the information. . . . The trader demanded the chicken." When Mauki opens his mouth to explain the missionary's absence, he finds "Bunster did not care for explanations. . . . The blow caught Mauki on the mouth and lifted him into the air. Clear through the doorway he flew, across the narrow veranda, breaking the top railing, and down [12 feet] to the ground. His lips were a contused, shapeless mass, and his mouth was full of blood and broken teeth. 'That'll teach you that back talk don't go

with me,' the trader shouted, purple with rage, peering down at him over the broken railing" (*Stories*, 1540–41). Having never met a white man like this, Mauki keeps a low profile, but "he heard the gossip of the village and learned why Bunster had taken a third wife—by force, as was well known. The first and second wives lay in the graveyard, under the white coral sand, with slabs of coral rock at head and feet. They had died, it was said, from beatings he had given them. The third wife was certainly ill-used, as Mauki could see for himself." In contrast to Mauki's willingness to learn and adapt to new information in order to survive, Bunster is "offended with life" (1541). This is why he fails to understand Mauki-of-the-three-*tambos*. The villagers have been unable to resist Bunster, but "Mauki was of a different breed, and, escape being impossible while Bunster lived, he was resolved to get the white man" (1541).

Bunster bangs Mauki's head against walls, burns him with cigars, rips from his nose the prized cup handle he has been wearing as adornment, "tearing the hole clear out of the cartilage." At this Bunster cries, "'Oh, what a mug!'. . . when he surveyed the damage he had wrought." But Bunster's favorite device for tormenting Mauki is a glove made of the skin of a ray fish, used by islanders to sand canoes and paddles.

> The first time he tried it on Mauki, with one sweep of the hand it fetched the skin off his back from neck to armpit. Bunster was delighted. He gave his wife a taste of the mitten, and tried it out thoroughly on the boat-boys. The prime ministers came in for a stroke each, and they had to grin and take it for a joke. 'Laugh, damn you, laugh!" was the cue he gave. Mauki came in for the largest share of the mitten. Never a day passed without a caress from it. (*Stories*, 1542–43)

But worse, it is Bunster's lack of respect for Mauki's *tambos* that seals his fate:

> All other white men had respected his *tambos*, but not so Bunster. . . . [Mauki] was made to miss many a meal, and to go hungry many a day. He was ordered to make chowder out of the big clams that grew in the lagoon. This he could not do, for clams were *tambo*. Six times in succession he refused to touch the clams, and six times he was knocked senseless. Bunster knew that the boy would die first, but called his refusal mutiny, and would have killed him had there been another cook to take his place. (*Stories*, 1542)

This scene illustrates the depth of Mauki's belief in his *tambos* and hence himself: he is willing to suffer in order to uphold his personal and communal sense of ethics.

When Bunster contracts blackwater fever, Mauki "waited and watched, the while his skin grew intact once more." He orders "the boys" to beach the cutter, scrub her bottom, and overhaul her. The "boys" evidently think the order came from Bunster, and they obey. When Bunster begins to recover, he lies "convalescent and conscious, but weak as a baby." Meanwhile, Mauki has packed his few trinkets, including the china cup handle, into his trade box: "Then he went over to the village and interviewed the king and his two prime ministers. 'This fella Bunster, him good fella you like too much?' he asked. They explained in one voice that they liked the trader not at all. The ministers poured forth a recital of all the indignities and wrongs that had been heaped upon them. The king broke down and wept." Mauki interrupts them: "'You savve me—me big fella marster my country. You no like 'm this fella white marster. Me no like 'm. Plenty good you put hundred cocoanut, two hundred cocoanut, three hundred cocoanut along cutter. Him finish, you go sleep 'm good fella. Altogether kanaka sleep 'm good fella. Bime by big fella noise along house, you no savve hear 'm that fella noise. You altogether sleep strong fella too much.'" Mauki then orders Bunster's wife to return to her family house: "Had she refused, he would have been in a quandary, for his *tambo* would not have permitted him to lay hands on her" (*Stories*, 1543). Mauki persuades the islanders to help him. But there are limitations to his agency: he might not have been able to pull off his plan because of his *tambo* about touching a woman, which shows that, for him, living honorably is more important than winning. That the reader is here reminded of Mauki's personal ethic—his *tambos*—is ironic, for in the next scene Mauki exacts a terrible revenge.

As he has had the cutter's bottom scraped, Mauki also returns to the house and methodically removes the white skin of his former master, the thing that oppressed him, and, grotesque as this is, it is the rare reader who is not cheering him on:

> The house deserted, he entered the sleeping-room, where the trader lay in a doze. Mauki first removed the revolvers, then placed the ray fish mitten on his hand. Bunster's first warning was a stroke of the mitten that removed the skin the full length of his nose.
>
> "Good fella, eh?" Mauki grinned, between two strokes, one of which swept the forehead bare and the other of which cleaned off one side of his face. "Laugh, damn you, laugh."
>
> Mauki did his work thoroughly, and the kanakas, hiding in their houses, heard

> the "big fella noise" that Bunster made and continued to make for an hour or more.
>
> When Mauki was done, he carried the boat compass and all the rifles and ammunition down to the cutter, which he proceeded to ballast with cases of tobacco. It was while engaged in this that a hideous, skinless thing came out of the house and ran screaming down the beach till it fell in the sand and mowed and gibbered under the scorching sun. Mauki looked toward it and hesitated. Then he went over and removed the head, which he wrapped in a mat and stowed in the stern-locker of the cutter. (*Stories*, 1543)

Mauki arrives at Port Adams "with a wealth of rifles and tobacco such as no one man had ever possessed before. But he did not stop there. He had taken a white man's head, and only the bush could shelter him. So back he went to the bush-villages, where he shot old Fanfoa and half a dozen of the chief men, and made himself the chief over all the villages." When Mauki's father dies, Mauki joins with his brother, who rules Port Adams, to unite the ancient enemies, the salt-water men and the bushmen: "the resulting combination was the strongest of the ten score fighting tribes of Malaita" (*Stories*, 1544). He also makes peace with the Moongleam Soap Company:

> One day a message came up to him in the bush, reminding him that he owed the Company eight and one-half years of labor. He sent back a favorable answer, and then appeared the inevitable white man, the captain of the schooner, the only white man during Mauki's reign who ventured the bush and came out alive. This man not only came out, but he brought with him seven hundred and fifty dollars in gold sovereigns—the money price of eight years and a half of labor plus the cost price of certain rifles and cases of tobacco. (*Stories*, 1544)

It is important to note that Mauki not only secures his revenge, but he also uses its benefits to aid his people and his neighbors, and, by also satisfying the white man's justice by repaying his debt, allays that threat. In the conclusion we are once again directed both to outer appearances and inner realities, now successfully united in a leader: "Mauki no longer weighs one hundred and ten pounds. His stomach is three times its former girth, and he has four wives. He has many other things—rifles and revolvers, the handle of a china cup, and an excellent collection of bushmen's heads," his appearance and accouterments now matching his self-image. The narrator concludes, "more precious than the entire collection is another head, perfectly dried and cured, with sandy hair

and a yellowish beard, which is kept wrapped in the finest of fiber lava-lavas. When Mauki goes to war with villages beyond his realm, he invariably gets out this head, and, alone in his grass palace, contemplates it long and solemnly. At such times the hush of death falls on the village, and not even a pickaninny dares make a noise. The head is esteemed the most powerful devil-devil on Malaita, and to the possession of it is ascribed all of Mauki's greatness" (*Stories*, 1545). Heads were generally taken from worthy opponents whose *mana* or strength then became the property of the owner of the head. In a literal sense, the native belief is here demonstrated to be quite true. In finding identity and agency Mauki has removed the white skin that ruled him, and has the head too.

Bunster, with no inner life, becomes the one whose visage is gazed upon by its owner. The man who could not survive without his white skin is another of London's "inevitable white men" whose weakness and moral savagery inevitably lead to a gruesome end. London also described the type in "The Terrible Solomons," a story completed within days of "Mauki." John Saxtorph is a genocidal monster who receives his just deserts. If a white man such as this could even begin to succeed, London's narrator notes, it is by monstrous stupidity:

> He must have the hall-mark of the inevitable white man stamped upon his soul. He must be inevitable. He must have a certain grand carelessness of odds, a certain colossal self-satisfaction, and a racial egotism that convinces him that one white is better than a thousand niggers every day in the week, and that on Sunday he is able to clean out two thousand niggers. For such are the things that have made the white man inevitable. Oh, and one other thing—the white man who wishes to be inevitable must not merely despise the lesser breeds and think a lot of himself; he must also fail to be too long on imagination. He must not understand too well the instincts, customs, and mental processes of the blacks, the yellows, and the browns; for it is not in such fashion that the white race has tramped its royal road around the world. (*Stories*, 1519)

Though "the inevitable white man" could have been construed in a Spencerian sense to be an inspiring vision of the predestined white man's success, the notion that he wins by stupidity points to the obvious fate of the stupid in London's fiction.

Mauki keeps running away in an attempt to define himself, unlike Bunster and the other dissolute whites, who are trying to lose themselves. And

he continues to resist others' definitions of himself; though he loses years of his life, he becomes his true self. He is strong and admirable not just because he survives, nor because he gains a perfect revenge upon his oppressor, but because in the end he prevails on behalf of himself *and* his people. In this sense, although like Buck his behavior reflects his internal and tribal ethic, intact and unspoiled by outside force, Mauki does something Buck does not: he learns racial politics.

Riedl and Tietze call Mauki "a down-and-outer who is living human life in what must be the most sordid of possible environments," but Mauki prevails and retires a wealthy and respected man, a Malaitan Chun Ah Chun.[110] Mauki hardly seems a naturalist hero: he is not degenerate, his heredity is excellent, he does not become overwhelmed by "the most sordid of possible environments," he does not "fall," and in the end he is not a "down-and-outer" at all. The phrase "down-and-outer" is better applied to Bunster than to Mauki. In fact, Bunster, like Frank Norris's McTeague, is a more typical naturalist character than is Mauki. The white Bunster seems predetermined by heredity and environment to be brutal, stupid, and even insane. He is unable to understand that his own crimes cause his death, whereas Mauki, unlike most naturalist characters, is able to learn from experience, successfully rely on a sense of ethical purpose, and prosper in wisdom and power. His is the ultimate underdog's story, the opposite of the decline of Bunster. Mauki lives and acts according to his own ethic, and his life is understandable only in this framework. He well fits Don Pizer's definition of ethical naturalism, but in this story the "naturalistic hero" has been split into two, one half succumbing to the realities of his identity and environment, and one resisting and prevailing, fulfilling Pizer's insistence upon the inner possibilities of the naturalist hero following Zola's philosophy that naturalistic fiction should explore neglected areas "of the interaction between social reality and the inner life."[111] "Mauki" displays both an unstinting focus upon the realities of the environment and a belief in the meaning of resisting it and everything that violates the self. As Pizer claims, "The primary goal of the late nineteenth-century American naturalists was not to demonstrate the overwhelming and oppressive reality of the material forces present in our lives," such as white supremacy as portrayed in "Mauki," but the "moral responsibility or heroism" of the main character.[112] "Mauki" would not be nearly as understandable without its sense of an inner self as a driving force, no matter what the environment; it fulfills Pizer's definition of naturalism with its insistence upon subjectivity in its hero. But in the end, as in

The Call of the Wild, the fulfillment of a sense of an integrated identity is its enduring message for the reader.

DAVID GRIEF, LONDON'S ANGLO-SAXON HERO

London's second volume of South Seas stories, *A Son of the Sun* (1912), also offers sensitive portraits of whites and nonwhites, but this time there is a white hero introduced at the beginning. David Grief initially represents London's Anglo-Saxon fantasy self, as he flourishes as a white man in the South Seas without cruelty or exploitation (as unlikely as that sounds), develops positive allegiances with the whites and the many island peoples he encounters, finds his skin tans golden brown, and so passes everywhere. For London, Grief would be an opportunity to relive his South Seas experiences as a hale and hearty hero. Yet as the stories follow one another, Grief's larger-than-life status is progressively diminished, the romance of his heroism balanced with a more realistic and broad-ranging sense of the scene, focusing more and more upon nonwhite heroes instead of Grief. If London's romanticism at first runs riot with his new hero, it is then transformed into a quieter, more reflective and naturalistic sense of Grief's *relative* importance among the peoples of the Pacific. As Grief is slowly withdrawn, the foreground is increasingly taken up by indigenous men. Grief evolves into an observer, a mere "correspondent" rather than a Nietzschean centerpiece. The David Grief stories demonstrate the ever-evolving nature of London's imagination; he could not merely stay with one point of view, especially when it came to race.

In the title story Grief is introduced as a successful capitalist, a righteous model of manly behavior, the best sailor in the South Seas, and so on. In other words, he begins life as another of London's overdrawn formula heroes, like the odious yachtsman-adventurer of "Bunches of Knuckles" or the hollow writer-sportsman of "The Kanaka Surf." Grief is identified with the sun, a motif going back to the Klondike tales, where Sol, a version of Apollo, was the Eye of Heaven looking down in judgment on the deeds of human beings. He is contrasted with a lesser white man, Griffith, sick from the sun, whiskey, and fever: "'Nothing's too mean and low for me now,'" he says, "'and I can understand why the niggers eat each other, and take heads, and such things. I could do it myself'" (*Stories*, 1890). Grief, on the other hand, is a "true" "son of the sun":

> He had been born to the sun. One he was in ten thousand in the matter of sun-resistance. The invisible and high-velocity light waves failed to bore into him. Other white men were pervious. The sun drove through their skins, ripping and smashing tissues and nerves, till they became sick in mind and body, tossed most of the Decalogue overboard, descended to beastliness, drank themselves into quick graves, or survived so savagely that war vessels were sometimes sent to curb their license. (*Stories*, 1894–95)

Like a tall-tale hero, Grief arrived in the South Seas in a hurricane. His yacht wrecked, he stayed behind in Tahiti to make his fortune. He becomes a boyish rover, but hidden beneath his good humor, eternal youth, and brown physique is a sharp business sense. But still, he is a magnificently built man:

> The cheap undershirt and white loin-cloth did not serve to hide the well put up body. Heavy muscled he was, but he was not lumped and hummocked by muscles. They were softly rounded, and, when they did move, slid softly and silkily under the smooth, tanned skin. Ardent suns had likewise tanned his face till it was a swarthy as a Spaniard's. The yellow mustache appeared incongruous in the midst of such swarthiness, while the clear blue of the eyes produced a feeling of shock on the beholder. It was difficult to realize that the skin of this man had once been fair. (*Stories*, 1888)

Grief is also presented as a moral model: he plays the game, "not for the gold, but for the game's sake." A Hemingway prototype, he views the game as "a man's game, the rough contacts and fierce give and take of the adventurers of his own blood and half the bloods of Europe and the rest of the world, and it was a good game" (*Stories*, 1895). Grief is not merely an individualist, nor is he engaged in racial competition. His view is larger:

> [O]ver and beyond was his love of all the other things that go to make up a South Sea rover's life—the smell of the reef; the infinite exquisiteness of the shoals of living coral in the mirror-surfaced lagoons; the crashing sunrises of raw colours spread with lawless cunning; the palm-tufted islets set in turquoise deeps; the tonic wine of the trade-winds; the heave and send of the orderly, crested seas; the moving deck beneath his feet, the straining canvas overhead; the flower-garlanded, golden-glowing men and maids of Polynesia, half-children and half-gods; and even the howling savages of Melanesia, head-hunters and man-eaters, half-devil and all beast. (*Stories*, 1895)

Given his perspective, Grief feels called upon to enforce a moral code particularly upon the errant whites he encounters in the Pacific.[113]

Grief resembles the most famous modern white man gone native in the tropics, Edgar Rice Burroughs's Tarzan, as he displays some of Tarzan's class and race conflicts.[114] The South Pacific was a favorite setting for the boys' adventure books London read, such as Robert Michael Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1858). But as Edmond points out, London's morally muscular hero was also drawn from other Victorian sources, such as Thomas Hughes's *Tom Brown's Schooldays* (1857), in which "a man's body is given to him to be trained and brought into subjection, and then used for the protection of the weak, and advancement of all righteous causes and the subduing of the earth which God has given to the children of men."[115] Grief thus often feels called upon to set things "right" for whites and "natives." Richard Dyer has argued that such a white male body in colonialist settings has been pervasive in American fiction and film. With notable exceptions such as Johnny Weismuller as Tarzan and Errol Flynn in his pirate movies, until the 1980s, Dyer notes, it was unusual to see a white man seminaked, as opposed to nonwhite male bodies, which were routinely displayed in Westerns, plantation dramas, or jungle adventures. The Motion Picture Association Production Code prohibited chest hair except in boxing films and period adventure films (think *Tarzan* and *Hercules*). With Grief, white dominance is assured in a colonial setting by the darkening of the white hero's skin, even as his obvious muscle training argues for his innate spiritual (e.g., white) superiority; the tan does not signal a desire to be black but underscores the ability of whites to appear in a range of attractive colors, whereas to a gross white sensibility black is just black. The tan thus bespeaks a "right to intervene anywhere," and the "built body and the imperial enterprise" are "analogous." Grief's whiteness, his physique, and tan are indicators that he can occupy the life of the "rover" instead of some other more restricted life.[116]

Yet if Dyer's formula fits Grief well in the first few stories, it does not in later ones. In "The Proud Goat of Aloysius Pankburn," heavy-handed comedy reigns as Grief beats a white man out of his alcoholism; Pankburn is redeemed by his tribal chief Grief in a ritual of manhood. "A Little Account with Swithin Hall" portrays Grief as a model of fairness and justice as he settles his debts. But by "The Devils of Fuatino," Grief's role changes from self-righteous white boss to comrade on the side of indigenous resistance to whiteness. He helps save—note the "helps"—a Raiatean island occupied by white "robbers and

pigs" (*Stories*, 1926) (similar to the situation in "Yah! Yah! Yah!"). In a suspenseful standoff with pirates, Grief and the islanders—including the faunlike Mauriri, the Goat-Man—withstand attack after attack, eventually routing the pirates with their sharpshooting. The Goat-Man's body and bravery, not Grief's, is central, and value is placed not so much on individual heroics as on the restoration of community. When the islanders attack the pirates, we are told that the sharpshooters "singled out the blond heads and the brown" to aim at, as Grief watches approvingly (1940). This is an extraordinary moment in fiction: London has nonwhite characters single out Caucasian heads to shoot, as a white man looks on and then shoots at them too.[117]

But it is not an anomaly in London's David Grief stories: in "A Goboto Night," the protagonist defends a Chinese man, Peter Gee, abused by a young Australian racist who hates "Chink blood" (*Stories*, 2008). After the Australian is straightened out by a beating from Grief, he has to sign an oath that "'I must always remember that one man is as good as another, save and except when he thinks he is better'" (2018). Things worsen for whites in "The Jokers of New Gibbon," a black comedy about what happens when white men tease a native chief. Koho is "a black Napoleon, a head-hunting, man-eating Tallyrand" (*Stories*, 1942) who carries out a gruesomely comic revenge, applauded by Grief. Two more complex tales end the volume. In "The Pearls of Parlay" Grief is even more observer than participant, where he furnishes a tacit moral contrast to the pearl dealers who perish in a storm. The story as a whole is a complex reflection on capitalism versus tribalism, resulting in a revenge that leads to many innocent deaths. Riedl and Tietze note how "In narrative and image 'The Pearls of Parlay' can be seen as a depiction of the blindness of racism that leads to . . . a blindness that even nature condemns."[118] The final story, "The Feathers of the Sun," on the contrary, takes a broad burlesque tone. Grief observes as a native village takes revenge on the white trader who has made himself their overlord for many years. As a trickster tale it makes fun of everyone who scrambles for treasure in the islands, Japan, France, Germany, Britain, and the United States all ridiculously trying to overcome the tiny fictional island of Fitu-Hiva, even as the islanders overthrow their present oppressor, an Irishman named Cornelius Deasy, representing the Fulcrum Company. Calling himself the Feathers of the Sun, Deasy is an ironic caricature of the sun god Grief began as in this volume. Having ruined the local economy, he pontificates to the islanders about how he is protecting them from unscrupulous traders. Fat, drunken King Tui Tulifau manages to organize a conspiracy to

overthrow Deasy, drawing upon established island rituals of humiliation, as Deasy is tricked into being beaten with a dead pig in the closing scene. Money and property are restored; and island culture prevails. In this single collection one can see how far London's imagination could rove on racial matters, how if he first identifies with his white hero he can then identify with the brown, laughing islanders of Fitu-Hiva who triumph over their white masters.

RACIALISM IN *ADVENTURE* (1911)

Unfortunately, London did not always achieve such liberality in his racial thinking in the South Seas. If his realism, naturalism, and sense of humor could portray the races as equally worthy, turning racialist as the market preferred, he could also justify the white man's actions in the South Seas as part of a grand race drama enacted within Western progress. Clarice Stasz has observed that London "did not require consistency of himself" and wrote for different audiences, sometimes playing to popular notions of adventure, and that his "vacillation reflected that of the age. During the Progressive Era, Americans were trying to resolve similar inconsistencies between idea and reality."[119] But still—*Adventure* is a shock compared to his Pacific short fictions. In contrast to *A Son of the Sun*, *Adventure* has all the negative aspects of naturalism and romanticism as literary modes and none of their positive attributes. Its "heroes" are anything but; it is hard to believe they were created by the same author of protagonists in the short stories.

Composed beginning in the Solomon Islands in October 1908 and completed in May 1909 aboard the *Tymeric* on the way home to California from Australia, *Adventure* was pitched by London to prospective publishers as an account true to life, based upon his own observations in the Solomons, having spent five months there and contracted five diseases, as he put it (*Letters*, 804). In a letter to Charles A. MacLean, publisher of *Popular Magazine*, an action and adventure journal, which eventually did serialize *Adventure*, London notes that he wrote the major portion of *Adventure* while "right on the ground, so that the red raw savagery I have described is the real thing. After getting partway through the book, I fell victim to a multiplicity of ills which sent me to the hospital in Sydney and compelled me to abandon the voyage" (863).

It is as though *Adventure*, with its weak romantic plot and rampant racialism, was London's revenge on the Solomon Islands for his defeat there. But it was a poor attempt, painfully showing how weakened his writing powers

became when he played to broad and unexamined romantic and racial stereotypes, which, as we have seen, often occurred when he was ill. *Adventure* is as inadequate in its limited racial point of view as it is in basic narrative technique, one weakness inflaming the other. Despite its ready acquiescence to the racist formulas preferred by many magazine editors, London had difficulty placing *Adventure*. Macmillan reluctantly published it in book form in 1911. As in *A Daughter of the Snows*, the romance in *Adventure* is false, and the novel's naturalism is without purpose, a far cry from Tavernier-Courbin's description of the synergistic "naturalistic romance" in *The Call of the Wild*.

London's observations on Pennduffryn Plantation on Guadalcanal are interwoven in the novel with stories told to him by plantation owners Tom Harding and George Darbishire, and by ship captains, barmen, and other whites he encountered in the Solomons.[120] It tells of Berande Plantation owned by fever-stricken Dave Sheldon, whose partner has died, leaving him to manage the contract workers. He is saved by the arrival of Joan Lackland, a brave and beautiful young tomboy raised on Hawai'i (modeled on London's friend Armine von Tempsky, from Maui), with her Colt automatic on her hip and her Baden Powell hat planted on her head. Lackland becomes Sheldon's new partner, and together they face the daunting task of maintaining Berande and suppressing rebellion by the workers. In the end they fall in love, despite the hopes of adventurer John Tudor; the book concludes with Lackland telling Sheldon, "'I am ready, Dave.'"

Stasz, to date one of the few critics to analyze *Adventure*, calls it "the nadir of London's longer tales, lacking character development and suspense," presenting racialism "without apology." In accord with the imperialistic fervor of the day, the white characters "never question their right to exploit native lands and people, and they use violence because, they explain, the natives are violent toward one another." Consequently, she concludes, "the Spencerian system of social dominance is fully reinforced: male over female, white over black." As Lackland sacrifices her criticisms of Sheldon and her female independence for marriage, "so white racial dominance is cemented in the end by the success of Dave's methods at Berande." Stasz attributes London's failure in *Adventure* to his view of it as a money-making diversion, his illnesses, and the general "vacillation and ambiguity of the age" when it came to gender and race. *Adventure* lacks "the most productive part of his creativity, his ability to identify with the character so completely that the reader participates in the character's journey."[121] As with *A Daughter of the Snows*, it is possible that

Adventure is meant to be a satire, but this position is hard to sustain given the novel's unceasing racial vituperation.

Sheldon is first seen riding on the back of one of his workers, too weak with fever to walk, reflecting the true nature of the white man's "dominance" in the Solomons. The "man-horse," as the worker is called, is "greasy and dirty and naked save for an exceedingly narrow and dirty loin-cloth; but the white man clung to him closely and desperately."[122] This false dominance alerts the reader to a possible disparity between the narrator and the protagonist. Sheldon is hardly presented as admirable: when he goes to the hospital to examine workers sick with the same fever, he observes, "Stretched on the platform, side by side with and crowded close, lay a score of blacks. That they were low on the order of human life was apparent at a glance. They were man-eaters. Their faces were asymmetrical, bestial; their bodies were ugly and apelike." This would not seem to be the best way to view one's employees. Though Sheldon feels no kinship with the sick workers, he does experience "the thought of kinship" when he sees a sick hawk outside his house (11). The workers' real "disease" is that they are subhuman but even lower than a hawk, in Sheldon's mind.

When Lackland romanticizes the workers as primitives, Sheldon tells her, "'You are used to Polynesians. These boys are Melanesians. They're blacks. They're niggers—look at their kinky hair. And they're a whole lot lower than the African niggers. Really, you know, there is a vast difference. They possess no gratitude, no sympathy, no kindliness. If you are kind to them they think you are a fool. If you are gentle with them they think you are afraid. And when they think you are afraid, watch out, for they will get you'" (98–99). Even though Sheldon is right in his assessment of their hostility to whites (for their own very good reasons) Lackland doesn't listen to Sheldon and embarks on her own trading and recruiting trips, having procured a new ship in Sydney. Sheldon is then moved to share with her his vision of the South Seas of the future:

> "Give us fifty years, and when all the bush is cleared off back to the mountains fever will be stamped out, everything will be far healthier. There will be cities and towns here, for there's an immense amount of good land going to waste."
>
> "But it will never become a white man's climate, in spite of all of that," Joan reiterated. "The white men will always be unable to perform the manual labor."
>
> "That is true."

"It will mean slavery," she dashed on.

"Yes, like all the tropics. The black, the brown, and the yellow will have to do the work, managed by white men. The black labor is too wasteful, however, and in time Chinese or Indian coolies will be imported. The planters are already considering the matter. I, for one, am heartily sick of black labor."

"Then the blacks will die off?"

Sheldon shrugged his shoulders and retorted:

"Yes, like the North American Indian, who was a far nobler type than the Melanesian. The world is only so large, you know, and it is filling up—"

"And the unfit must perish?"

"Precisely so. The unfit must perish." (113–14)

This chilling analysis sounds much like the plans for world domination voiced by one of London's most frightening characters, the world dictator Goliah, who sets out to conquer the world by using machines to harness energy so that work days will be compressed to only a few hours and universal prosperity will reign. Goliah's eugenic vision includes the enslavement of nonwhites and the elimination of mentally retarded people and other "defectives."

The climax in *Adventure* occurs when Lackland, Sheldon, Lackland's Tahitians, some of the Berande workers, and a party of Poonga-Poonga saltwater men set off to rescue Tudor and his party from their gold-hunting expedition into the interior. Once in the bush, the narrator's tone changes to irony and more symbolically charged descriptions of nature that almost offsets the falsity of the love story. Now that the whites are off the plantation, they find that the jungle is in charge. As they penetrate farther and farther, attempting at every step to avoid traps set by the bushmen, "Most awed of all were Joan and Sheldon, but, being whites, they were not supposed to be subject to such commonplace emotions, and their task was to carry the situation off with careless bravado as befitted 'big fella marsters' of the dominant breed" (337). As is common in this novel, here racial superiority is not earned but performed according to popular racialist expectations.

When the party reaches a clearing, they capture a bushman who is smoking a white head over a fire. The Poonga-Poonga men require little encouragement: "Their faces were keen and serious, their eyes eloquent with the ecstasy of living that was upon them; for this was living, this game of life and death, and to them it was the only game a man should play, withal they played it in low and cowardly ways, killing from behind in the dim forest gloom and

rarely coming out into the open" (340). Though the narrator calls these men cowards, the "eloquent eyes" and "serious" faces are a different view altogether, and their "ecstasy of living" echoes the passage in *The Call of the Wild* when Buck experiences the ecstasy in the snowshoe rabbit chase, while playing a "man's game" uncomfortably reminds the reader of David Grief. When the Poonga-Poonga boys find the head of Gogoomy, the Berande rebel who escaped into the bush to foment further rebellion, for them "Gogoomy's end was a joke." As Lackland and her Tahitians stand by appalled, they laugh at "the funniest incident that had come under their notice in many a day. . . . Gogoomy had completed the life-cycle of the bushman. He had taken heads, and now his own head had been taken. He had eaten men, and now he had been eaten by men" (342). Such grotesquerie taunts Lackland's notion of the "romance" of the scene (343). In the end Tudor is rescued, the only member of his nine-man party not to have his head taken. Lackland consents to marry Sheldon after he duels with Tudor. Swinging away from the jungle, the book ends back on the sea coast, as improbability and sentiment reign, traditional order having been restored. Despite its ostensible happy ending, the confusion and bitterness of this book are what stay with its reader.[123]

Ironically, chapters 23 and 24 of *Adventure*, the jungle expedition, seem to be the basis for one of London's last and most important stories, "The Red One" (1916), which uses this setting for a quite opposite view of race. He returns to the jungle four years later for the only time, with a successful union of naturalism and romance and a radically rethought treatment of race. "The Red One" tells of the expedition of a lepidopterist, Bassett, who encounters, instead of his rare butterfly species, the strange god of a tribe of headhunters deep in the bush. After witnessing the murder of his companion on the trail and the destruction of villages by competing bushmen, he is rescued by a bushwoman who later grants him his first glimpse of the Red One. He is brought into the village and gains the trust of the shaman Ngurn. Bassett thinks that the giant object he heard must have come from some faraway civilization in outer space, and mourns that it has fallen among such savages. He schemes to escape and tell the world of his discovery, but he grows too ill before his plan can be carried out. In order to experience the Red One once more, he offers Ngurn his head. Gazing into the undulating, singing surface of the mysterious orb, the rational scientist beholds something undreamed of. "The Red One" is one of London's most inward and symbolic stories, employing numerous myths and archetypes of a Jungian wise old man, the persona, shadow, and anima.

Though he read Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious* after he wrote "The Red One," it is one of his most suggestive psychological parables, as well as a radical relativizing of race.[124]

London got the idea of "The Red One" from George Sterling: an explorer would encounter in a faraway wilderness a message from Mars or another planet but would be unable to convey the message to others beyond the wilderness. But unlike H. G. Wells in *The War of the Worlds* (1898), London complicates the possible origin of the giant red sphere. Bassett sets out on a scientific mission but finds himself on a quest for identity and his own eternity as he is overcome by the awesome sphere that confronts his entire belief system, including the idea that alien intelligences created it. Charmian London believed "The Red One" revealed "more of [London] than he would be willing to admit," including "his ultimate discouragement with the endless strife of the Great War." She emphasizes Bassett's decision to "play fairer than fair" with old Ngurn, whom London calls in the story "a forerunner of ethics and contract, of consideration, and gentleness in man" (*Stories*, 2317).[125] In this late story a man's ultimate discouragement seemingly results in spiritual insight coupled with an evolved sense of community among the races, also suggesting the influence once again of Huxley's ethical Darwinism against the pitiless process of natural selection.

In *Adventure* London did not conceptualize the jungle and its secrets as symbolic of the unconscious, though the general pattern and certain specific details were there. The *Adventure* expedition starts out from the river bank, escapes snares, has a man murdered by an unseen bushman, discovers the village with its atrocities, and takes a captive who is driven ahead as a guide with a poisoned spear. In "The Red One," Balatta, though she finds and saves Bassett, will become his captive, taking him to see the great god at the risk of her life, and then is tossed aside by him. In *Adventure* the jungle is described as a place of "mystery and fear, of death swift and silent and horrible, of brutish appetite and degraded instinct, of human life that still wallowed in the primeval slime, of savagery degenerate and abysmal" (*Adventure*, 345), though in retrospect from "The Red One," it is the whites who are also "abysmal." Instead of the Red One being discovered in the center of the jungle and worshipped, a giant banyan tree appears after the party crawls for a long time in "damp black muck" underneath "tangled undergrowth." The tree, "half an acre in extent, . . . made in the innermost heart of the jungle a denser jungle of its own. From out of its black depths came the voice of a man singing in a

cracked eerie voice" (345). This is Tudor singing, not the mellifluous tones of the Red One. "'My word, that big fella marster he no die!'" comments Binu Charley (346). Swollen with mosquito bites, Tudor is tended by Lackland, as Bassett will later be tended by Balatta. The events and motifs are not in the same order, but they constitute a comparable pattern. In "The Red One" the difference is that the reader and Bassett really confront mystery in the end. In *Adventure*, despite the long jungle trek, one does not feel that one has come anywhere at all, as the characters make no spiritual progress.

Adventure's jungle is similar to that in "The Red One," especially its wantonness, prodigality, and impenetrability. Appearing in *Adventure* with "coiled and knotted climbers . . . thrown from lofty branch to lofty branch or hung in tangled masses like so many monstrous snares" (*Adventure*, 349), the jungle in "The Red One" is itself "a monstrous, parasitic dripping of decadent lifeforms rooted in death and lived on death" (*Stories*, 2300). The danger of the jungle in *Adventure*—"It was the mysterious, evil forest, a charnel house of silence, wherein naught moved save strange tiny birds" (*Adventure*, 350)—is more pointed and more symbolic in "The Red One": "the dank and noisome jungle. . . . actually stank with evil, and it was always twilight" (*Stories*, 2300). Bassett has entered the jungle to find a rare butterfly and kill it, while in the jungle of *Adventure* the orchids and birds are the ones that move silently as they hunt (*Adventure*, 349). In "The Red One" the natural images used in *Adventure* are compressed into the silence of the stalking, invisible bushmen, not prey to the white party this time but hunting Bassett. In *Adventure* the party goes to rescue a sick man; in "The Red One" a sick man searches for his life and salvation.

Other details suggest more contrasts. In *Adventure*, the devil-devil house with its secrets is destroyed by the whites along with the entire village; in "The Red One" Bassett sits in the devil-devil house with old Ngurn curing heads, hoping to learn the old man's secrets in listening to his stories of long ago, pleading with him to "cure" his own head that he may experience the wisdom of the Red One. Bassett almost comes to appreciate Ngurn's "art." One of the last images in "The Red One" is of Bassett's vision "of his own head turning slowly, always turning, in the devil-devil house beside the breadfruit tree" (*Stories*, 2318). Bassett, "lost in ecstasy," stares into the undulating, singing surface of the Red One: With his own eyes, Bassett sees "color and colors transform into sound till the whole visible surface of the vast sphere was

a-crawl and titillant and vaporous with what he could not tell was color or was sound. In that moment the interstices of all matter were his, and the interfusings and intermating transfusings of matter and force." One notes the repeated prefix "inter," as though an explanatory metaphor for the experience of the Red One. Bassett hears the voice of the Red One as the voice of "archangels," but he also hears an impatient movement from Ngurn. He thinks momentarily about depriving Ngurn of his head by blowing it off with his shotgun, but decides that since Ngurn "had played fair according to his lights, played squarer than square," that he will as well, in a moment of interracial, even exchange. Bassett bows his head, stretching the spinal cord taut:

> He knew, without seeing, when the razor-edged hatchet rose in the air behind him. And for that instant, ere the end, there fell upon Bassett the shadow of the Unknown, a sense of impending marvel of the rending of walls before the unimaginable. Almost, when he knew the blow had started and just ere the edge of steel bit the flesh and nerves, it seemed that he gazed upon the serene face of the Medusa, Truth. (*Stories*, 2317–18)

Sheldon sees Joan capitulate to him, while Bassett sees "the Medusa, Truth." The use of such an archetype shows both how weak *Adventure* is and how intriguing are the late South Seas stories like "The Red One." In *Adventure* London was fighting back, in a personally petty way, against the blackness overwhelming his adventure on the *Snark*, racializing his illness and failure. In "The Red One," though written while he was much more ill, the perspective has fundamentally changed, with London's myth-making imagination dominant. Still focused on illness and death, he is thinking about a human race instead of individuals black and white, about the secrets of the earth and the stars and not just about the "discoveries" a Westerner might make in a chain of islands, or even just an author. As "The Red One" is a re-vision of *Adventure*, its return by a dying man to a scene of personal failure suggests that disease can be redeemed by self-knowledge, community, and a relinquishing of superiority to "others."[126]

London's last Hawaiian stories of *On the Makaloa Mat* similarly shift to a different conception of selfhood. Hawai'i became the place to which he returned to reexperience the self that evolved within him there. When London died on November 22, 1916, an *ilima* lei from his friends in Hawai'i was buried with him. Charmian would go on to build her "House of Happy Walls," as she

called it, decorating the walls of the large stone two-story house among the redwoods with war clubs, paddles, and tapa, mementos of their times together in the South Seas. Her tribute to him was a fitting one.

REVISITING HOUSES OF FICTION IN *ON THE MAKALOA MAT* (1919)

After the last story in *Smoke Bellew*, "Wonder of Woman," was mailed on November 25, 1911, London took a hiatus from short story writing that lasted nearly five years, broken only by two minor stories, "The Captain of the Susan Drew" and "Whose Business Is to Live." But beginning with "The Hussy," written in May 1916, closely followed by "The Red One," "Like Argus of the Ancient Times," "The Princess," and the stories of *On the Makaloa Mat*, London undertook his last and most intense period of short story writing. These stories are mainly revisitings of former "houses" of fiction, but unlike the formulaic Klondike yarns of Smoke and his friends, the late Hawaiian stories signal a new burst of creativity untied to formula, particularly those finished after June 1916, when London first read the works of Jung. In chapter 8 I analyze closely London's final story and one of his most significant, "The Water Baby," written just weeks before his death. In the present chapter, however, I conclude with discussion of the other late Hawaiian stories, all of which are rewarding as stories and revealing as to his renewed vision of universal kinship. It is hard to say what kind of final "breakthrough" London had before his death at the age of forty, but there is no question that he was physically and mentally struggling in the seven months from May until November 1916, which represent his last burst of short story writing, and also no question that this period, difficult though it was, produced some of his most powerful fiction. Despite the heavy doses of medication he was taking for severe kidney pain, as well as his other ailments and challenges, he continued his regular work schedule of a thousand words per day and handled the many demands of the ranch. Reading Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious*, especially as it helped generate a deeper understanding of the myths and legends of Hawai'i, where he spent so much time in 1915–16, was of tremendous import. Jung's is the most heavily annotated volume in London's existing library.

As Homer and Milton, Nietzsche, Darwin, Spencer, and Huxley, as well as racialist authors had a profound impact upon him at the dawn of his career, Jung offered London late in life a worldview that explained things in a similarly broad sweep, but with attention to the unity of humankind rather than

its differences. London leaped at this new vision. He had fought many battles of identity, and if there were a "collective unconscious" or universal identity as merely human perhaps he could finally find his spiritual home. Instead of the petty divisions of racialist science, Jung sought universal community. In Jungian terms, London hoped for the peace of an "individuated" personality (fully realized, psychically balanced and within a community) by the time of his death. "I have quite a few books on psychoanalysis," he wrote to a friend in 1916; "Also, I have just recently subscribed to the *Psychoanalytic Review*. . . . Doctor Jung's book is a very remarkable book to me. . . . It is big stuff" (*Letters*, 1598). Other letters of this time betray a weary, dull, and irritable mind, and there are dreadful exchanges with certain correspondents. London was beginning to recognize that just as he had given up on socialism as a political alternative, his philosophical reliance upon materialism was not going to yield any further understanding of the meaning of his life or his relation to the lives of those around him. It is no wonder that he was absorbed by Jung's healing psychology of the unconscious.

Jung's version of the soul offered support for the notion of free will and at the same time membership in a "collective unconscious," which none of London's other scientific or philosophical positions had been able finally to offer, and it also proposed a model of confession as the route to membership in the "home" of shared humanity. In a passage marked by London in his copy of *Psychology of the Unconscious*, Jung's translator Beatrice Hinkle states in her introduction that a person "may to a certain extent become a self-creating and self-determining being" if he is able to "reflect upon himself and learn to understand the true origin and significance of his actions and opinions." Rather than being "a series of reactions to stimuli," an individuated person's behavior will reflect "the real level of his development" and he will no longer be "self-deceived."[127] Charmian records how her husband was "all a tip-toe with discovery" at this "inkling free will" he received from Hinkle and Jung. A few days later he admitted: "'For the first time in my life, . . . I see the real value to the human soul of the confessional. . . . I tell you I am standing on the edge of a world so new, so terrible, that I am almost afraid to look over into it.'"[128]

Jung and London were representative of their time, what Ralph Waldo Emerson would have called "Representative Men." As near-coevals—Jung was born on July 26, 1875, and London on January 12, 1876—in their different disciplines they confronted many of the same problems of their age. In what Jung would call a case of "synchronicity," they both experienced their greatest

crises in 1913, when London's Wolf House burned to the ground and Jung had his bitter split with Freud, who had once called him his beloved son. There are other parallels—their peculiar mothers, their attraction and repulsion to the ideas of Nietzsche, their interest in extraterrestrial life, their reading in ancient myth. But their most marked similarities are their notions of archetypes: Jungian analyst James Kirsch remarks that like Jung, "Jack London recognized that the archetypes are the factors which arrange and control our fate" and that through understanding them one can establish a relationship to destiny and no longer remain a mere object of fate. Kirsch connects London's struggle to Nietzsche's and Jung's and describes a modern world of "unrest" due to contempt for the nonrational world of the unconscious Self.[129] Within a Jungian framework, the chthonic Mother, as in "The Red One," takes on a central role, replacing sun-hero myths. From Sol as the figure of divine judgment, a Father–Sky God who observes from afar, the sun in London's psyche is here transformed into an ideal feminine whole.

The Hawaiian stories London wrote after "The Red One" share many of its attributes—especially the psychological ones—but are more celebratory of indigenous Pacific civilization (the exception being the Freudian-inspired bitter husband in "The Kanaka Surf," the weakest in the volume). Their dialogic structures, most often involving a *haole* listener and native teller, subtly challenge race, gender, and class, but with a misleadingly light "talk-story" style, as they say in Hawai'i. For Loudermilk, *On the Makaloa Mat* reveals an author "less concerned with trying to define and determine the importance of race, and more with a supraracial version of Hawaiianness," as he continues to use "superior multiracial characters" as well as "cultural straddling that allows persons of any race to appropriate the best elements of any culture. In this model, race cannot be an essential determinant of identity." Though he mourns the loss of the old Hawaiian ways, in these tales London "illustrates the necessity of assimilation and progression beyond traditional cultural roles. . . . Identity has become. . . something fluid, and London has moved far beyond racial concerns, toward the universal and archetypal," Loudermilk concludes.[130]

"On the Makaloa Mat," finished June 9, 1916, uses a Hawaiian cliché to frame the collection: being "on the mat" in Hawai'i means you belong, that you are *kama'āina*. And yet it is another story of farewells to previous "houses" of identity, with Old Hawai'i furnishing the backdrop of the lost home. The story presents the "noble situation" of outward belonging and inner diaspora

as two Hawaiian sisters, Bella and Martha, sit under a magnificent *hau* tree to talk. Bella recalls her loveless marriage to George, a "gray" lifeless *haole*, and her momentary escape into the arms of Lilolilo, a Hawaiian prince who dallies with her on one of his royal progressions. London describes the biracial beauty of the two women and their mixed-race children and grandchildren; true cultural identity here is not based in race but on whose heart does and not belong "on the mat" in Hawai'i. In losing Lilolilo, Bella can be comforted only in thinking how fortunate she is to have lost George. For Loudermilk Bella represents "a new kind of success, London's Hawaiian ideal," for with her, "success lies in retaining what is essentially Hawaiian while participating in the new Hawai'i." Unlike Bella's husband, Martha's husband Roscoe Scandwell is part-white and part-Hawaiian and has made the transition to becoming successfully Hawaiian; he is "well-taught of Hawaiian love and love-ways, erect, slender, dignified, between the two nobly proportioned women" (*Stories*, 2340). For Loudermilk, "Roscoe belongs to Hawai'i in the same way London dreams of belonging to Hawai'i: regardless of race."[131] Certainly Roscoe passes, and his sort of peace with his identity represents a considerable refinement on the tanned passing of David Grief.

"The Tears of Ah Kim" is also a love story of sorts, but it overlays a psychological parable. Ah Kim has tolerated beatings from his mother for years and has never married, but when he meets Li Faa, a woman determined to save him from his fate, he is able to escape. Yet "'I will have no half *pake* daughter-in-law,'" his mother declares to Ah Kim, *pake* being the Hawaiian word for Chinese: "'All *pake* must my daughter-in-law be, even as you, my son, and as I, your mother. And she must wear trousers, my son, as all the women of our family before her. No woman, in the she-devil skirts and corsets, can pay due reverence to our ancestors. Corsets and reverences do not go together. Such a one is this shameless Li Faa.'" Li Faa "'is impudent and independent, and will be neither obedient to her husband nor her husband's mother'" (*Stories*, 2348). Li Faa, "from the Chinese angle, was a new woman, a feminist, who rode horseback astride, disported immodestly garbed on Waikiki on the surf boards, and at more than one luau had been know to dance the hula with the worst and in excess of the worst to the scandalous delight of all." Li Faa is transcultural, transgender, and transracial. Ah Kim has also "been bitten by the acid of modernity" and participates in the cosmopolitan culture of Honolulu (2349). As Li Faa is a composite of the cultural influences Hawai'i offered, so Ah Kim, according to Loudermilk, "retains his integrity—and supraracial

status—by refusing to privilege the old over the new or the new over the old."[132] As with most of the stories of *On the Makaloa Mat*, in "The Tears of Ah Kim" there is a modern relativity: "'That will do for China. I do not know China. This is Hawai'i, and in Hawai'i the customs of all foreigners change,'" says Li Faa (2350).

Given that London probably read Jung in late June 1916, "The Bones of Kahekili" (completed July 2) is probably his first truly Jungian story, and it has a less lightsome tone than the two that precede it. A wealthy *haole* landowner, Hardman Pool, likes to call together his Hawaiian retainers to sit in judgment on them. One day he pries a sacred story out of old Kumuhana, involving a sacrifice of commoners upon the death of an *ali'i* (or lord) in Kumuhana's village. Kumuhana was chosen for this ritual but escaped death in a grotesque accident. The arrogant Pool is not unlike the old chiefs who would sacrifice people to their whims; as he extracts Kumuhana's history, he thinks, "He knew his Hawaiians from the outside and the in, knew them better than themselves—their Polynesian circumlocutions, faiths, customs, and mysteries" (*Stories*, 2357). His presumed racial dominance over his workers is repeatedly undercut in the story; the workers have developed several strategies to one-up him, as when, recognizing he usually reduces their rations in half, they routinely double the size of their requisitions. As Loudermilk notes, "One by one, they each get what they want from Hardman Pool and need only reaffirm his leadership and stroke his pride in return."[133] Pool does not resemble a heroic white master but rather the butt of the joke, recalling the whites in "The Feathers of the Sun" and "The Jokes of New Gibbon."

Similarly ironic in tone, "Shin-Bones" was written next, finished August 21. It is the story of a young *ali'i* who has been educated at Oxford, but the target of its irony is harder to pinpoint. To a *haole* companion, waiting with him and his broken-down car by the side of a road on the fictional island of Lakanii (a form of London's Hawaiian name, Lakana), Prince Akuli recounts an experience of journeying to a cave containing the bones of his ancestors and how the journey changed his way of thinking about his past and present identities. As he talks, an old lady makes him a special lei of *hala*; out of her hearing, he says "'It stinks of the ancient. . . . I stink of the modern'" (*Stories*, 2387). He explains that he is no longer able to believe in the "mystery stuff of old time. . . . This is the twentieth century, and we stink of gasoline" (2394). Here Akuli casts his people in the primitive past, yet Akuli's mother has bribed him to retrieve some fabled ancestral bones for her with the promise of an Oxford education.[134]

When Akuli actually finds the ancient burial cave of his love-triangled ancestors, his cynicism vanishes into epiphany:

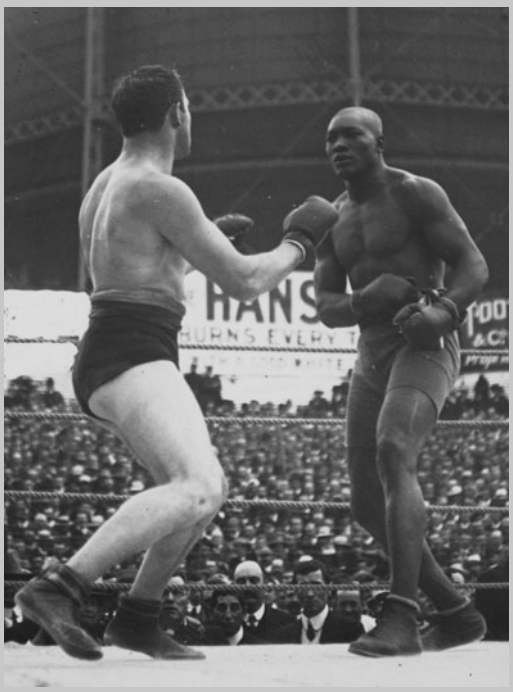
> "I had mooned long and often over the 'Idyls of the King.' Here were the three, I thought—Arthur and Launcelot and Guinevere. This, then, I pondered, was the end of it all, of life and strife and striving and love, the weary spirits of these long-gone ones to be invoked by fat old women and mangy sorcerers, the bones of them to be esteemed of collectors and betted on horse races and ace-fulls or to be sold for cash and invested in sugar stocks. (*Stories*, 2392)

Moved by their story of the past and his people, Akuli keeps the bones as memento mori instead of giving them to his mother.[135] Akuli's name in Hawaiian means "the squid," connoting malleability and dispersion: "And so, out of all incests and lusts of the primitive cultures and beast-man's gropings toward the stature of manhood, out of all red murders, and brute battlings, and matings with the younger brothers of the demigods, world-polished, Oxford-accented, twentieth century to the tick of the second, comes Prince Akuli, Prince Squid, pure-veined Polynesian, a living bridge across the thousand centuries, comrade, friend, and fellow-traveller" (*Stories*, 2378). The "great lesson" Akuli learns from the bones is, as Loudermilk puts it, "akin to London's changing system of categorization in that it moves beyond the personal, physical, or racial toward the universal"; in telling a Polynesian legend that resembles the Anglo-Saxon King Arthur legend, London engages Akuli and his interlocutor in reflections on "universal similarities and truths."[136]

"When Alice Told Her Soul" humorously engages the value of the confession discussed by Jung; Charmian saw it imaginatively re-creating Jung's thesis that the libido can be released from the disturbing contents of the unconscious and can find creative outlet if the individual confesses his or her secrets.[137] In the tale Honolulu is presented as a small town whose secrets are exposed by Alice Akana, a madam who gets religion and confesses publicly, in the meantime confessing the sins of the powerful class who were her clients. She is both a "cultural insider" and "a means of access to the culture for the outsider," as Loudermilk notes.[138] Again London creates a powerful woman character, like Li Faa or Martha and Bella, to tell the history of Hawai'i, but in effect to revise it. Though this is a comic story, it takes a serious look at the power structure of the islands and some of the underhanded ways people have acquired land and power. Irony is provided in that preacher Abel Ah Yo, of mixed race himself, manipulates racial issues in order to line his pockets. "When Alice Told

Her Soul" did not please the already ruffled sensibilities of London's well-connected friends in Honolulu, some of whom appear in this roman à clef. But one suspects that the Honolulu hue and cry did please Alice's creator.

After surveying so many of London's Pacific works, from the uneasy negotiations of authorial identity and race in *The Cruise of the* Snark to his last Hawaiian short stories eight years later, it is appropriate to conclude with what he did not write in the Pacific. With the exception of *Adventure*, which reflects the worst of London's racialism and experiences in the South Seas, London's writings and speeches about Oceania offer sensitive and sympathetic insights into the complexities of "race" and "culture" in its history, while also attacking Western colonialism and even whiteness itself. What he did not do—which would have seemed natural to do in *The Cruise of the* Snark especially—was to make himself a hero. In that book he dwells on his illnesses and struggles to survive and pass in the Pacific; in his fiction he eschews white heroes in nearly all the stories and instead offers heroic South Sea Islanders with their own complexities and their own struggles to survive.



FIVE

Jack London, Jack Johnson, and the "Great White Hope"

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The morning of July 4, 1910, dawned upon a divided nation. For months, boxing fans, newspapers, magazines, and even preachers had hyped the world heavyweight title boxing match to be held in Reno, Nevada, between Jack Johnson and Jim Jeffries. This Independence Day match between the most famous—and infamous—black boxer of his day and the man whites rallied behind as their "Great White Hope" was nothing less than a "racial Armageddon," as Randy Roberts, one of Johnson's biographers, sets the scene.[1] On the day of the fight the liquor flowed and spirits soared. A mob of nearly twenty thousand fans assembled at the stadium on the outskirts of Reno, checking their firearms at the gate as a brass band played "All Coons Look Alike to Me" and similar selections. Shouting crude racial taunts, most of the crowd believed that Jeffries would give them the triumph whites had desired in the two years following Johnson's defeat of Tommy Burns in Sydney, Australia, December 26, 1908, the first time the heavyweight belt had been won by a black man. Reno was wired to many cities around the country and the world, and while the mob sweated in the stands, members of elite New York clubs listened to telegraphic reports. In every major city, crowds followed the action outside newspaper offices on the streets. As Roberts notes, at the Tuskegee Institute Booker T. Washington, who had declined to cover the fight as a reporter, set up a special room to receive telegrams from Reno. White church congregations met to pray for Jeffries, just as black congregations prayed for Johnson.[2] Nearly five hundred reporters converged upon Reno, along with boxers, retired boxers, fans, gamblers, pimps, prostitutes, entrepreneurs, high rollers, hobos, and criminals. Reformers around the world delivered diatribes against the brutality of boxing and particularly the danger in this match for the white race, but Reno was a place where a great risk could be undertaken. But what if Johnson beat Jeffries? For most whites the notion was unthinkable.

Among the reporters in the stadium were sports writers Rex Beach, Alfred Henry Lewis, and Thomas E. Flynn. Reporter Helen Dare was on hand to give the "woman's perspective." There were famous boxers and wrestlers: John L. Sullivan, James J. Corbett, Battling Nelson, and Tommy Burns. And there was the most famous writer in America, Jack London, recently returned from his two-year South Seas voyage. London had covered the Johnson-Burns fight in Sydney in 1908 for the *New York Herald*, his reports appearing in every major newspaper in the world. Now, in Reno Beach and London were played up as "Two Well-Known War Correspondents Now at the Front" by the Hearst Syndicate. In this "war" London was expected to present "life in the raw" as in his Russo-Japanese War coverage or his *Snark* reportage. Boasted the *San Francisco Chronicle:* "He has traveled much in the interest of sociologic and economic study. . . . Not only the principals in the contest, but the spectators gathered by the thousands from everywhere will engage his pen" (3 July 1910). The *Ottawa Journal* was more direct: "Watch for Jack London's Story of the 'White Versus Black' Fight. . . . The Jeffries-Johnson fight in which $101,000 and the championship of the world is involved—not to speak of the racial supremacy—will be watched by millions. . . . Jack London may be looked to, to write a story that will throb with realism" (18 June 1910). Photos of London often accompanied those of either Johnson or Jeffries; the *Portland Oregonian* displayed a "Portrait in Sailor Costume of Famous Author Who Will Report Big Fight for *Oregonian*" (23 June 1910).[3]

In this fight, nothing less than white American manhood was at stake. As Gail Bederman notes, predictions of Johnson's defeat were related to the evolutionary millennialism celebrated by the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893, for "Johnson implicitly challenged the ways hegemonic discourses of civilization built powerful manhood out of race."[4] Jeffries and Johnson were what Hazel Carby has called "race men": those who establish race pride through superiority in some field of achievement, so that the success of one member of the race is the success of all.[5] London too was positioned as a "race man" by the Hearst Syndicate—at the forefront of the "battle" for worldwide race victory.

The press played on racial differences between the two fighters. A common theme was that the combination of Jeffries' "Caucasian" brain and courage would overpower Johnson; it was thought that the white man would have the advantage of self-control. It was also believed that the black man's skull was thicker than the white man's skull and could thus take more punishment, and

that black boxers had naturally weak abdomens. As historian Dan Streible observes, "The White Hope was sober, the 'Black Menace' a drinker. Jeffries was stolid; Johnson, flashy. He was humble, not a braggart; given to discipline, not dissipation; courageous, not 'yellow.'. . . While black celebrities were usually forced to stand as representatives of their race, Jeffries—the most cherished of white hopes—became a representative of his in a way few other white people had. His image was made to bear the essence of whiteness."[6] Thus a headline on a story of London's in the *Pittsburg Press* read, "Jeffries is Brusque, Johnson 'Sunny Jack.' No Hero Ever Cared Less for Adulation than 'Big Jim,' Modest and Unassuming But No Braggart" (30 June 1910). The general feeling was that the aging Jeffries, a virtuous working man, had come out of retirement and was trying to get himself back in shape to save the world from blackness, while Johnson's devotion to girlfriends, gambling, fast cars, and the high life marked him as the proverbial "Bad Nigger" of white nightmares. *Collier's* reporter Arthur Ruhl summed up the July 4, 1910, white racist consensus: "'Let's hope he kills the coon.'"[7]

For Bederman the seemingly "excessive" reaction to Johnson was hardly out of character with the racial times, with lynchings in the South and the "white man's burden" taken up overseas. The "powerful, large male body of the heavyweight prizefighter" was the "epitome of manhood," and so the white public would naturally hope to prevent anyone whom they saw as unworthy to wield social power from attempting the heavyweight championship. For his part, "Johnson consciously played upon Americans' fears of threatened manhood by laying public claim to all three of the metonymic facets of manhood—body, identity, and authority." He would be the real man, possessed of a power equalizing him with whiteness (which he mockingly but obsessively pursued), but also remain assertively black.[8]

The champion later suffered for his triumphs—including harassment from the press, the Department of Justice, the FBI, the U.S. Congress, and the White House; eventually he landed in prison. Claiming manhood in America, Johnson committed the crime of being black while claiming the rewards of whiteness. The more he won on his own terms, the greater threat he posed. He was threatening not only for being a black man physically dominant over white men, but a challenge to the basic structures of the turn-of-the-century U.S. society, built upon class and race distinctions and increasingly dominated by a small but enormously rich group of white financiers, industrialists, and oil men who ruled over an impoverished working class. As this underclass increas-

ingly filled with immigrants and blacks as cheap labor, white working-class men felt they had little chance for upward mobility or job security; it was to the capitalists' advantage to blame cheap nonwhite labor for the problem. White working-class men could at least, in consolation, revel in their hoped-for defeat of Jack Johnson as a distraction from their own classed and raced lives.

At the turn of the century boxing was the only major U.S. sport with a significant black presence. It had earlier been transformed from a bare-knuckle, unregulated activity into a "rationalized sport of gloves governed by time and weight classifications," as boxing historian Gerald Early notes. The development of the gentleman boxer coincided with "the maturation of bourgeois culture." With the growing needs of capitalism, boxing became "more and more self-conscious about masking its barbarism" in order to serve "a particular and powerful set of collective psychic needs, . . . imagined in the modern bourgeois-dominated world."[9] Yet as boxing evolved, it expanded from a gentleman's game to include others formerly excluded, including blacks. But how could bourgeois culture triumph in a sport that could also be the stronghold of powerful black men? While the white man was on the one hand believed to be the cool-headed gentleman and the black man a savage, a simultaneous and seemingly contradictory stereotype also developed because black boxers like Johnson increasingly displayed superior mental and physical skills. By the turn of the century, boxing (the realm of the gentleman), and its lower-class cousin, prizefighting (the game of the masses), joined themselves into a major middle-class sport, with the black fighter as "the master technician" while the white man symbolized "the purity of primitivism." Out of this, says Early, came the myth of white male innocence, the Kid Galahad persona. White champions such as Jess Willard (who defeated Johnson in Havana in 1915), Rocky Marciano, or Max Baer were expected to take punishment but then land a final thud, not to win by guile or ability. In contrast, the great black boxers of the twentieth century were "tricksters of style," including Johnson, Muhammad Ali, Sugar Ray Robinson, Sugar Ray Leonard, and Joe Louis.[10] The conflicting self-images enforced upon black boxers were nothing new: they derive from the "crafty slave" stereotype, the Negro laughed at by whites for his put-on foolishness and feared for his guile and treachery. But in Johnson's case, *really* to *be* a trickster was radically to challenge many stereotypes, including not only those of boxing but of American "manhood" and "civilization" itself.

As a dark trickster with the body of a god, Johnson just plain scared white

people. To fend him off, every available stereotype was necessary. If he could not be allayed with one stereotype, there was always another one to try. There was the claim that he had a "yellow streak." He responded with ability and outspokenness that didn't look or sound very "yellow." Fans and reporters tried to promote the idea of a "typical" black boxer, "talented, but indolent and frivolous," as Roberts notes. Yet while Johnson may have looked sleepy, his "slowness" demonstrated control. If he were stereotyped as a "'good-natured black animal,'. . . lazy, happy, carefree," the crowd also sensed something deeper, "a carnivorous potential for violence." He was compared to a black cat or an outlaw, destructive and lustful. And his brightly colored dress in the ring, unlike the traditional black and white garb of the other boxers, also marked him as defiant. Away from the ring, with his hair parted in the middle and a phony English accent, Johnson dressed as a "Sport," like Jelly Roll Morton.[11] Like London Johnson got a lot of mileage out of exaggerating and even mocking his most oft-commented-upon personal motifs. Both of them lived off their fame in a style not totally unlike that of Oscar Wilde (whom they both admired) a generation before. London wore "costumes" (riding pants and a Baden-Powell hat) just as Johnson did; he was quite aware of marketing his masculine outdoor style to sell books. Yet each man prized sincerity, and each spoke of having a hidden, inner life to which few were admitted. As in *Martin Eden*, in Johnson's life there was a tragic price for defiance of bourgeois white society.

Newspaper readers had not forgotten London's "The Yellow Peril" (1904), and they saw his ideas as synonymous with a sort of "thinking-man's" racism, or racialism, directed specifically at Asians but generally at all nonwhite races. Despite his antiracist short stories, in newspaper interviews London had praised the "Anglo-Saxon" often enough for white readers to miss his finer points and qualifications. For white readers of his fight coverage, his racialism was critical. Yet among white reporters London seems to have been virtually alone in questioning how the stereotypes fit Johnson.[12] As we know, London was no stranger to racial stereotyping, but exposure to Johnson seems to have lessened his comfort with his earlier stereotypes about black people, a fitting end to a South Seas voyage that had more broadly liberalized his racial views in general. Racial tropes of identity in the Johnson fight coverage include white fear of the dark male body, the racial underdog, cross-racial identification, and the trickster ability to reverse racial roles and stereotypes.[13]

The Johnson fights were closely covered weeks in advance, with analyses of the fighters and predictions. London's accounts begin in accord with the racial

prejudice of the day, but by the end of his dispatches he praises Johnson's talent and wit—not trickery—embodied in his "golden smile." Johnson reportedly never lost his smile despite every possible slur from opponents, reporters, and the howling crowds. For whites, Johnson's grin became the infuriating, uninterpretable sign of his victory. It was not the foolish grin borrowed from minstrelsy but a knowing smile.[14] In both the 1908 and the 1910 newspaper stories, London is converted to champion Johnson for his role as underdog, his physical and mental talent, and for his performer's smile.

In the ring, Johnson's put-on English accent and verbal teasing were rhetorical weapons as effective against the white audience as against his opponents, ridiculing the "gentleman boxer" figure along with the lower classes in the cheap seats. His "mouth fighting," as it was called in boxing, was quite different from the usual repetition of crude slurs and threats usually uttered by fighters and their seconds. Johnson's wit was ironic comment upon hierarchies of race and class and on the entire notion of "success." Johnson deployed mouth fighting as well as he did his fists, and though it helped make him a star, like Muhammad Ali decades later, his outspokenness on the stage eventually brought in the authorities.

Having seen and heard Johnson up close in 1908, London did not trivialize him or predict his defeat in 1910, like other white reporters. Though in 1910 London's early dispatches repeat stereotypes, these references disappear in later reports. As a fellow celebrity who had made it the hard way, and whose self-image, artistic production, and public persona were impelled by conflicting personal, political, and racial impulses, as well as by an overriding sense of having to fight for what he needed, London was drawn to Johnson. He was an amateur boxer, boxing with everyone who was willing, including Charmian. He prized Johnson's jokes and witticisms, as he was an ardent prankster at home on his ranch and among writing and social acquaintances. But besides Johnson's playful sense of fun, London admired his professionalism, balance, and restraint—his artistry with both his body and his words.

As with the Russo-Japanese War correspondence, London's Jack Johnson coverage falls into the category of dramatic nonfiction. The genre's liminality allows London to enact a bit of Anglo-Saxon grandstanding and then quietly but increasingly cross-identify with Johnson. In covering these two fights, London became most interested not in promoting racialist ideas or public opinion, nor even in his own public image, but in Johnson. Johnson turned out to be a character with whom to identify, not a stereotype, and London turned out to be

a better writer and a poorer racialist for having encountered him. It seems fitting that these two studies in contradiction, these multimedia, mouth-fighting performers, should come together in a world extravaganza of masculine, racial, and national identity.

Johnson reigned as heavyweight champion of the world from 1908 until 1915, breaking the color line imposed earlier by John L. Sullivan, as he knocked out competing champions with ease, infuriating white sports commentators: "A Negro is the champion pugilist. [The] dark-colored peoples of the earth are threatening to ply the mischief generally with the civilization of the white man. . . . Is the Caucasian played out?"[15] President Theodore Roosevelt, the nation's foremost proponent of the "strenuous life," repudiated Johnson in 1909 by inviting Battling Nelson to the White House as the "white champion of the world."[16] For some African Americans too the champion looked like trouble. The *Richmond Planet* noted, "No event in forty years has given more genuine satisfaction to the colored people of this country than has the signal victory of Jack Johnson" (9 Feb. 1909), but from Booker T. Washington's or W. E. B. DuBois's perspectives on "elevating" blacks, Johnson would have been a questionable role model. While blacks admired his victories against white opponents—beating up a white man for pay—his attention-getting behaviors "made it hard on the race," an attitude Early terms "black philistinism."[17] Yet Washington arranged a special meeting with him, and so would many other black intellectuals.[18]

Johnson's life was sharply divided between public and private worlds, and accordingly he was known by different names. Lil Arthur was a name bestowed upon him early on by white spectators, while Papa Jack was a name he used with his girlfriends. Arthur John Johnson was born March 31, 1878, the son of an impoverished family in Galveston, Texas, and a member of the first generation of black men and women born after slavery, the same generation as London. Johnson seems to have left the family soon after the great flood of 1900 washed away his parents' home and scattered the eleven family members.[19] In his autobiography he tells fanciful tales about his early travels, a "mostly true" account, as Huck Finn would say, and an initiation into manhood on the move, similar to London's tramping book *The Road* (1907).

When Johnson was starting out, in Texas as in much of the nation, prizefighting was tolerated but officially illegal. Johnson began fighting in the late 1890s and moved up within a few years to be a local champion, but his successes went largely unnoticed because black men were forbidden to fight whites. He went to

California, where he defeated black heavyweights, and was eventually allowed to fight whites, including Jack Jeffries, the brother of Jim Jeffries. According to Roberts, Johnson struggled to find self-respect in a world that exploited all fighters and hated black men. He became obsessed with race: "Further and further he drifted into the white man's world," but it was "always nigger this and nigger that." Johnson hired a white man to drive his car, another to manage his boxing career, and another to help him dress in the morning. He spent money on white prostitutes and he married a white woman, Lucille Cameron: "Perhaps in a limited way he even believed that he was accepted in his new world. But he wasn't. He was still simply picking up the pennies. It was just that there were more of them," Roberts comments. When he was no longer a champion, the painful reality of his racial and hence class status came home to him.[20] But it had always been there: like London, one of Johnson's greatest preoccupations was with the social class whiteness bestowed.

In 1912–13 Johnson would be punished for his audacity: under the Mann Act he was convicted of transporting a woman over a state line for "indecent purposes," that is, prostitution, an entirely false charge, as he was traveling with his wife, Cameron. Having filed an appeal, Johnson fled the country and picked up matches in Canada, Europe, and Mexico. He was finally defeated in twenty-six rounds in Havana by Jess Willard in 1915.[21] He returned to the United States in 1920 to face ten months in Leavenworth Prison. As a consequence, he was stripped of both his title and his boxing license. Once his term was done, he joined road shows like an aging freak, allowing young boys to punch him in the stomach for a nickel.

THE 1908 WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT FIGHT IN SYDNEY

The Sydney, Australia, fight was the biggest turn in Johnson's career. In 1908 Canadian fighter Tommy Burns had been dogged by reporters asking him when he would agree to fight Johnson, but he had managed to hold out until some unusually ambitious promoters convinced him to fight with a large purse that would guarantee Burns $30,000, win or lose (Johnson received $5,000 when he won). The day was set for December 26, 1908, and the stadium was filled with a crowd of five thousand spectators with thirty thousand more outside. The Sydney *Illustrated Sporting and Dramatic News* indicated the temper of the boxing fans: "Citizens who have never prayed before are supplicating Providence to give the white man a strong right arm with which to beat the

coon into oblivion," and the *Australian Star* spoke of "race war."[22] With the odds 7–4 in favor of Burns, the fight was nevertheless Johnson's from the start. Johnson weighed 220 pounds and was six foot two; as agile as he was strong, he could run a hundred yards in eleven seconds and high-jump nearly six feet. A story circulated at the fight that a doctor had pronounced Johnson "not human."[23] A well-executed punch from such a man would hit an opponent with the force of thousands of pounds. Burns was more than a half-foot shorter at five foot seven and weighed 175 pounds; he depended upon his "innate" racial abilities.[24] This was, of course, a mistake. He was not prepared for an intelligent fighter in top condition who did not subscribe to myths of white superiority. Johnson taunted him throughout the fight, avoiding the quick knockout he could have had and further humiliating Burns. It was revenge against whites.

In the ring Johnson kept telling Burns where to try next, pointing to his stomach. By only the second round Burns's right eye and mouth were severely injured. Burns was no stranger to mouth fighting, calling Johnson a "cur" and a "big dog," growling "Come on and fight, nigger. Fight like a white man." But Burns's taunts only seemed to please Johnson, and he out-mouthed Burns as he out-boxed him. Johnson employed his fake English accent against Burns's authentic Canadian accent, saying "Tommy" like "Tahmy": "Poor little Tahmy, who told you you were a fighter?", "Good boy, Tahmy," and "Poor, poor Tahmy. Who taught you to hit? Your mother? You a woman?" By the thirteenth round, spectators yelled for the fight to be stopped; in the fourteenth, Burns was punished with a hard right knock across the canvas, and he collapsed eight seconds into the count. The fight over, the white crowd sat in stunned silence.[25] The press responded with maudlin stories about how "white beauty" had faced a black "primordial ape": "He was still beauty by contrast—beautiful but to be beaten; clean sunlight fighting darkness and losing."[26] Burns was toasted at dinners, while Johnson was not even allowed to enter restaurants and hotels.[27]

At the time of the 1908 fight, London, broke, ridden with tropical diseases, and having failed to sail the *Snark* around the world, had arrived in Sydney to enter the hospital, sell the boat, and return to California to recover. But he was in the right place at the right time, since U.S. newspapers could usually not afford to send correspondents half-way around the world. *New York Herald* stories from Australia with London's byline were syndicated in hundreds of newspapers around the world (see *Letters*, 876), significantly increasing London's readership. When he encountered Johnson, London was at an ebb, his much-

publicized voyage ended because of illness. Like the vanishing South Seas islanders of the Marquesas, London had realized his vulnerability to forces beyond his control, the naturalistic fate of many of his characters, but one which he had thought he could transcend in his authorial and adventuring agency. Now even his white badge of rank, his skin, was peeling off his arms and his writers' hands. Covering the Johnson fight gave him an opportunity to step back into the world's spotlight as a man, a white man, and a famous author.[28]

The headline to London's story the day after the fight in the *Australian Star* read: "The Great Glove Fight. Boxing Championship of the World. Johnson's Smile. Burns Hopelessly Out-Classed. Vivid Description. . . . Black Versus White. By Jack London, Author of 'The Call of the Wild' and other works." London's story was *the* story of the fight, and his syndicated dispatches were often accompanied by long sidebars about him and his *Snark* voyage, with photographs of course. Editors picked up on his frequent mention of Johnson's smile for headlines, as well as his portrayal of Johnson as a clever actor. As the *New York Herald* ran the story on December 27, "Jack London Says Johnson Made Noise Like a Lullaby with His Fists as He Tucked Burns in His Little Crib in Sleepy Hollow, with a Laugh. Plucky, but Absolutely Helpless, the White Man Seemed To Be the Victim of a Playful Ethiopian Who Did Just as He Would. NEGRO'S GOLDEN SMILE A TAUNT FOR HIS OPPONENT ALL THE TIME. Smashed to the Floor in the First Round, the Canadian Fighter Was Going Uphill Ever After and Never Had the Ghost of a Chance for Victory. SHOULD HAVE ENDED IN THIRTEENTH ROUND."[29]

London gets right to the point: "There is no use in minimizing Johnson's victory in order to soothe Burns's feelings. . . . Personally I was with Burns all the way. He is a white man, and so am I. Naturally, I wanted to see the white man win. Put the case to Johnson and ask him if he were the spectator at a fight between a white man and a black man which he would like to see win. Johnson's black skin will dictate a parallel to the one dictated by my white skin." But just because "a white man wishes a white man to win, this should not prevent him from giving absolute credit to the best man who did win, even when that man was black. All hail to Johnson. His victory was unqualified." Johnson displayed "bigness, coolness, quickness, cleverness, and vast physical superiority." Alas, says London, "Men are not born equal and neither are pugilists" (*Reports*, 258–59). London comments on his own boxing experiences, and, like many sports writers, he affects a personal dialogue with the athletes: "It's hard to talk, Tommy, but it is no harder than those wallops you received

on Saturday, and it is just as true that it is no dishonour to be beaten in a fair fight. . . . Jack Johnson, here's my hand too. I wanted to see the other fellow win, but you were the best man. Shake" (259–60).

London seems to have truly enjoyed watching Johnson play with Burns, but he says Johnson should have knocked Burns out. To calls of "Stop the fight!" London answers, "There was no fight. . . . A golden smile tells the story, and that golden smile was Johnson's" (*Reports*, 260). He compares Johnson to a schoolmaster and then to a film star, and adds, "When he smiled a dazzling flash of gold filled the wide aperture between his open lips, and he smiled all the time. He had not a trouble in the world, . . . as inaccessible as Mont Blanc" (262). Concluding, he asks, "But one thing remains. Jeffries must emerge from his alfalfa farm and remove that smile from Johnson's face. 'Jeff, it's up to you.'" (264). This closing line has been quoted as evidence of London's racism, but there is something in it many readers miss because it is quoted out of context.[30] London ironically compares Mont Blanc (Johnson) with an alfalfa field (Jeffries). His exit line is a taunt—a "smile?"—at Jeffries.

LONDON AND JOHNSON AT WORK, 1908–10

In his autobiography Johnson recalls his feelings upon defeating Burns:

> I had attained my life's ambition. The little Galveston colored boy had defeated the world's champion boxer and, for the first and only time in history, a black man held one of the greatest honors which exists in the field of sports and athletics—an honor for which white men had contested many times and which they held as a dear and most desirable one. Naturally I felt a high sense of exaltation. I was supremely glad I had attained the championship, but I kept this feeling to myself. I did not gloat over the fact that a white man had fallen. My satisfaction was only in the fact that one man had conquered another, and that I had been the conqueror.[31]

If following his 1908 victory he enjoyed teasing white newspaper reporters, elaborately praising Australian aboriginal arts and quoting liberally from his favorite works—*Paradise Lost*, *Pilgrim's Progress*, and *Titus Andronicus*,[32] Johnson struggled to set up a touring show in Australia to earn a return ticket home, and, back in the States, he continued to do these shows, with such titles as "Wine, Women, and Song," "The Rollickers," or "Yankeedoodle Girls." Yet he had changed: he was no longer as likely to listen to white promoters. He

felt that the title of heavyweight champion set him apart from his race: "Now more than ever," Roberts notes, "Johnson was expected to conform. And now more than ever Johnson felt he did not have to. The collision course was set."[33] It would be hard to say whether Johnson was ever converted away from his desire for whiteness, but it is clear that he was now much more interested in being black, according to his own definition.

And then began the search for the Great White Hope. Any white boxer whose manager whispered the phrase stood a chance, and this included even Asians, "Yellow Hopes" who were (at least) not black. The object of most of the speculation was of course Jim Jeffries, now three hundred pounds and in retirement. He did not like the idea of a black heavyweight champion and had said he would emerge and fight if a "coloured man or a foreigner won the world's championship" (*Dublin Freeman's Journal*, 29 Dec. 1908), but he still refused to fight Johnson. On April 4, 1909, the *Chicago Tribune* and other major papers ran a picture of a young blonde girl pointing a finger at the reader: the caption read, "Please Mr. Jeffries, are you going to fight Mr. Johnson?"[34] The stalemate would continue until 1910, when Jeffries was finally persuaded to start training to face Johnson. In the meantime, Johnson pursued the high life, exploiting the myths that surrounded and defined him. He owned a popular Chicago nightclub, the Cabaret de Champion. Its opening, he recalled,

> was one of the most spectacular affairs ever held in Chicago, and I doubt if a similar event has ever taken place anywhere in the world. Friends came from all over the world to take part in the launching of the enterprise and when the initial opening of the doors took place, thousands of people struggled to gain entrance, and for hours afterward were lined up for many blocks, awaiting an opportunity to get within.[35]

Johnson ordered the best materials and the best artisans to furnish the club; he insisted that "the appearance of the interior was neither gaudy nor vulgar. I had striven to make it distinctive and attractive but also had combined it with real beauty and dignity." When the cabaret was shut down by the police, Johnson attributed this setback to racial prejudice, "for in my cabaret the races had an opportunity to come in contact, a practice which in those days was not as well established as it is now." By then, tired of "the public's consuming interest in me," Johnson said that he was glad to close it.[36] Afterward, Johnson wore his head shaved, and accordingly in racist cartoons he was pictured as a snake, and he was said to wrap his penis in gauze for certain public occasions. His smile

now took on a lascivious air. He raced expensive cars at high speeds, moved around to avoid creditors, drank heavily, and at every opportunity flouted bourgeois values.[37] The Bad Nigger was waiting for the Great White Hope to come out and fight.

The Reno fight was a turning point in Johnson's life and career, as it would also have an effect on London. In the two years between 1908 and 1910, London continued to develop race as a theme, and he continued to celebrate the atavistic physical power of the "primitive" male body in stories like "When the World Was Young" (1910). Other works reflect the experience of the first Jack Johnson fight: the prehistorical interracial battle of "The Strength of the Strong" (1909) with its primitive male bodies in action, or "A Piece of Steak" (completed in June 1909), the tale of a broken-down Australian boxer's last fight. Tom King, once heavyweight champion of New South Wales, ruminates upon his broken body and his loss of youth as he trudges to the fight on an empty stomach: "There were Tommy Burns and that Yankee nigger—Jack Johnson—they rode about in motor-cars. And he walked!" Echoing Wolf Larsen's description of life as a mere "yeast," "A Piece of Steak" contains all of the naturalist characters of the 1908 heavyweight championship: the protagonist London, his health ruined at the age of thirty-two; Johnson, aged thirty, who would hit the downward spiral after his greatest victory two years hence; and Burns, a white hope who wasn't. Other London works from this period also explore race or ethnicity against class. "The Madness of John Harned" (completed in July 1909), for example, relates a deadly cross-cultural misunderstanding between a rich American devotee of boxing and a ring full of Ecuadorian bullfight fans. In this story, Anglo and Ecuadorian worldviews, values, classes, races, and allegiances collide in mutually ignorant violence. The visiting gringo, John Harned, unable to control his objections to bullfighting, ends up murdering several Ecuadorians and being shot dead himself.[38] And of course London had been celebrated for one of the first American prizefight novels, *The Game* (1905), in which a plucky but doomed young fighter's career is narrated from the point of view of his lover, his exploitation and eventual death seen as inevitable results of the cruel realities of "the boxing game." Though there are no African Americans in *The Game*, London's first notes on the story point to a conceptualization of the boxing hero as "fair" and his antagonist as "dark," an oppositional pair he would retain, as in *The Abysmal Brute* (1913).[39] However, his later observations of Johnson would complicate this binary.

Jack Johnson and Jack London seemed to think that a man could be freed of his background, but they were wrong. Certainly no one could be all the things (or so much the real thing) as people thought Johnson or London to be. London was not a one-man anti-Johnson squad. Just as the white media invented "The Bad Nigger" so they invented his presumed opponent, whether Jeffries or London. In 1908 and 1910 newspapers exaggerated what London wrote about Johnson, edited, headlined, captioned, and displayed his stories to bring out the most sensational aspects of race. London had no control over the editing of his dispatches, headlining, or other layout decisions, and often several paragraphs—usually analytical and often in praise of Johnson—were dropped by the editor. Photographs and artwork pit Johnson against London. If London characteristically tried to imagine alternate selves, he was nonetheless imagined by the media as a racialist stereotype. Despite all the hype, his admiration for Johnson here sounds as sincere as it did at the end of his 1908 coverage. He was called by more than one newspaper a "psychologist" of boxing, suggesting that he could somehow describe the internal motivations and character of both fighters.[40]

Joyce Carol Oates has explored the personal and professional psychological synergies between fighter and writers. She describes how champions from Jack Dempsey to Larry Holmes have insisted they performed only for money (as London also claimed), but "boxers fight one another because the legitimate objects of their anger are not accessible to them" to provide "a way of transcending [their] . . . fate[s]." She sees the "machismo of boxing" as generally a "condition of poverty." Under such circumstances, boxing is about creating a "double personality: the self in society, the self in the ring," a "double consciousness" like that of an author, an atavistic but artful self. Oates does not mention London, but he fits her formulation of boxers' and writers' "fanatic subordination of the self in terms of a wished-for destiny. . . . the final stage in a protracted, arduous, grueling, and frequently despairing period of preparation." Like boxing, writing requires "systematic cultivation of pain in the interests of a project, a life-goal. . . . The writer contemplates his opposite in the boxer, who is all public display, all risk and, ideally, improvisation," and although the fighter can find his limit, the writer's "ever-shifting" and "kaleidoscopic" world will never allow him that pleasure. When the writer is called upon to interpret a fight, "all is style," concludes Oates.[41] Given his public status, London might have used the world spotlight on boxing and his fame as a writer to run with some of his pet "scientific" ideas on race, but he did not, conforming instead to Oates's model of identification.[42]

Interested in boxing from boyhood, London was a natural to cover the sport.[43] In his early Jeffries-Ruhlin fight articles ("Gladiators of the Machine Age," 19 Nov. 1901), London let loose with his naturalistic and racial metaphors: "A big dark male [Jim Jeffries], hairy of chest and body, in one corner; in the other corner a big light male [Gus Ruhlin], smooth of skin and serious of face; overhead an artificial sun, and all around ten myriads and more of spectators; problem—which male, dark or light, and for a king's ransom, can beat the other into insensibility or helplessness?" (*Reports*, 250). Jeffries, later the Great White Hope, is the "dark male" atavism, while Ruhlin is said to lack "animality and grit":

> And the dark male smiled—not viciously, not insolently, not vaingloriously, just simply smiled and smiled, and fought. He was dark of skin, and he remained dark. It seemed natural the thing he was doing. But the fair skin of the light male flushed and blushed to a crimson tide which seemed to mark his conduct as unnatural. It was patent that one was a fighter, that the other was not; and it was patent that one must win, that the other could not. (*Reports*, 251)

Both contestants were white, but what we learn about race here is that, first, whiteness is an ideal whose purity can be betrayed by moral weakness, such as unnatural hesitation (manifested by flushing), and second, that "primitive" (but intelligent) darkness has an alluring smile. Here Jeffries, interestingly, is cast as "dark" and is given the smile later given to Johnson. In a subsequent set of fight stories London described Jimmy Britt as "intelligent animal," and Battling Nelson the "abysmal brute" (*Reports*, 253). The brute represents "the basic life that resides deeper than the brain and the intellect in living things"; it is "the very stuff of life—movement. . . . [and] a blind and illimitable desire to exist." Nelson, the "Dane" but the "lower type," "looked like a proletarian that had known lean and hungry years of childhood," with his weazened, colorless face, small eyes, and thick neck. But though his body is not beautiful like the "thoroughbred" Britt, "a well-fed and prosperous bourgeoise" (254–55), Nelson fights with "the will of life itself . . . apart from the mind and the spirit." London sees himself in both these bodies: "Britt is the finer human. Nelson is the finer fighting animal." London is the "intelligent brute," if you will: "And I, for one, would rather be either of them this day at Colma than a man who took no exercise with his body to-day but instead waxed physically gross in the course of gathering to himself a few dollars in the commercial game" (258).[44] On personal, political, and professional levels, London saw boxing and writing as social statements against indolence, laxity, and corrupt capitalistic values.

His defense of boxing sounds not unlike his defense of naturalism, of what he saw as honesty in contemporary literature. Like Johnson he was not at ease with the capitalistic society that paid, published, and advertised his art, but he willingly performed it and benefited by it.

THE 1910 WORLD HEAVYWEIGHT FIGHT, RENO

In 1910 the winner was to get 75 percent of the $101,000 and the loser 25 percent, but more money would come through contracts and film rights. As had been predicted, violence followed the Nevada fight. In Uvalda, Georgia, a gang of whites killed three black laborers who had boasted of Johnson's victory. In Houston, Roanoke, Wilmington, Washington, New York, Pueblo, Shreveport, New Orleans, Baltimore, Cincinnati, Los Angeles, Chattanooga, and other smaller cities and towns there were riots, murders of blacks, and severe beatings.[45] Later, the fight films were suppressed by a bill passed in Congress on the grounds that there would be more bloodshed: "[W]idely reprinted still photos of Johnson standing over an unconscious white hope confronted white viewers with an historically unprecedented image of black power," Streible states.[46] Religious organizations also enjoined President Roosevelt to stop the movies.

This controversy was the most wide-ranging public racial debate of the day—and its significance was not lost on its chief correspondent, especially because he was a subject, not just an observer, of the main event. The *San Francisco Examiner* of June 30, 1910, featured a cartoon by "Swinnerton": "Johnson's Training Stunts are None Too Strenuous," showing three panels. First was Johnson sparring with a skinny opponent, while watched by Jack London and others, London's name on the back of a director's chair. The next is of a comical-looking black man playing a bass, while another plays piano: "One of Johnson's new training stunts. This is supposed to develop his right hand upper-cut." Last, a black man dressed in striped pants and clown shoes walks down a country road watched by a jackrabbit that says, "And he calls that road work!" Headlines once again played up London as a contrast to Johnson, as if he were one of the contestants.[47] Under a photograph of Jack and Charmian London, the *St. Louis Republic* claimed: London is "the most famous of living authors"; the model of the strenuous life, "no living man better understands the physical supermen of which Jeffries is the Caucasian perfect prototype" (12 June 1910). For the *Republic* London was the pride of the Anglo-Saxon race, as it expressed in ultrahyperbole:

> The creator of Wolf Larsen and Martin Eden has lived his life among men who have beaten down mountains, curbed torrents, felled forests, fought flames, conquered the frozen glaciers of Alaska, wrested wealth from the bowels of the earth and health from the oxygen of the vacant spaces of the world. He sold newspapers as a boy, tramped with tramps, sailed with sailors to the Arctic and Antarctic seas, lived among the modern cave men, the men who have torn solid granite out of the path of progress, and he knows the psychology, physiology, and physique of his muscle men. No living man is better fitted to tell the titanic tale of the tremendous contest between the mightiest men of muscle the white race has given to the prize ring and the avatar of the sons of Ham, who will try in his person to avenge, as far as one man in one fight may, the numberless humiliations which the supermen of the white race have put upon the Negro. (12 June 1910)

The *Republic* goes on to claim that London had "often boxed with the great champion of the ring himself," had attended every fight in the last fifteen years, and was said to be "a personal friend of James J. Jeffries." This ridiculously exaggerated rhetoric explains why the *Syracuse Herald* should joke that "Nothing now can happen to the big fight—unless Jack London should suddenly be taken ill, necessitating its postponement" (30 June 1910), or why the *New York City Review* would add, "Literary note—Monday is the date of the great battle of words between Rex Beach and Jack London. Of course there will be several minor literary scraps, and incidentally a man named Jeffries will spar a few rounds with a Negro at Reno" (2 July 1910).

But London was not busy filing his clippings. His and his wife had fallen into despair after the death of their newborn daughter, Joy, three weeks before the 1910 fight. To make matters worse, he had been involved in a highly publicized barroom fight in Oakland's Tenderloin that resulted in a court battle.[48] Nevertheless, he wrote twelve articles on the Jeffries-Johnson fight beginning on June 23. Jeffries is a "big bear, heavy and rugged," he begins, "and he is physically a man that one may well say occurs no oftener than once in a generation" (*Reports*, 266). A description of Johnson opens the following day's dispatch: "Bag and baggage, bull pups, bass viols and phonographs, Jack Johnson stepped off the train at Reno. . . . Whirled away in an automobile . . . , he appeared unperturbed and happy, despite the fact that his train was three hours late. . . . His voice was just as jovial, his handshake as hearty, his smile as dazzling as when I last saw him in Australia." Although Jeffries and Johnson are both big, "they are vastly different types of men." Underneath his "garni-

ture of fighting strength, Johnson is happy-go-lucky in temperament, as light and carefree as a child." Despite disagreements with his manager, an abrupt change in training quarters at the last moment, and "joy rides interrupted by rude police," Johnson's demeanor showed not a trace of fatigue or irritation. Jeffries is the nature-man, the bear, while Johnson is surrounded by the accouterments of the performer, such as phonographs, and he knows how to make an entrance (266–67).

In a telegram to Charmian on June 24, 1910, ten days before the fight, London speaks of meeting Johnson's train: "Two days work done and ten more to do. Johnson remembered me as soon as he laid eyes on me and the last time was eighteen months ago. You know who I think will win."[49] London sees Johnson as the ultimate performer, and Johnson's accouterments as those of modernity: he arrives on a train, he is dressed to the minute, and he brings phonographs and cocktails. Johnson could have held his own anywhere. Like London he inhabited a different sphere than that of the mute, grouchy, uncommunicative Jeffries. London's first impression of Johnson as "carefree" shifts, however, into a sense of someone serious: "The illustration may seem far fetched, but it is just the way I feel." Such a statement about "feelings" is atypical for a sportswriter, and it alerts the reader. "Jeff is a fighter, Johnson is a boxer," London says, while Jeffries is a "Germanic tribesman," a creature of "primitiveness" responding to "Old mother nature . . . still red of fang and claw," Johnson is talent, fighting for money and living in the moment (*Reports*, 267).

In later articles Jeffries is called a Greek athlete, a Teutonic warrior, and the "abysmal brute" whose endurance will carry the day, says London. A silent "thinking" type, he is "the hairy-chested caveman and grizzly giant," a "Goliath" (*Reports*, 280, 294). His muscles are "twisted roll[s]" covered with "matted masses." Johnson, on the other hand, is described as a relaxed tiger, cool-headed and only seemingly "lackadaisical," the "tigerishness" and ease products of the showman. As in the Burns match, Johnson is the "chief entertainer" or "play-actor deliberately playing a part." Yet London observes, "He is not mastered by this tigerishness. He is manufacturing it. Back in that cool brain he decides he needs this display of tigerishness in his business, and so he displays it" (269, 272, 280, 285, 294).

As in the 1908 Burns fight coverage, London tries to dispel the notion that Johnson is cowardly: Johnson "showed no yellow," only "condition" and "undiminished speed" (299). London sharply criticizes Jeffries for refusing to shake

Johnson's hand at the beginning of the 1910 fight, noting that Johnson, even when mouth fighting, is always honorable in the ring:

> Johnson is a past master at mouth fighting when in the ring. In his battle with Tommy Burns, Johnson engaged in mouth fighting with Tommy, with Tommy's seconds and the whole Australian audience, and the honors of every exchange belonged to him. It must be added as well that not one vile word or harsh epithet fell from his lips. Everything he uttered was pure fun, genuine wit, keen-cutting and laughter-provoking. (*Reports*, 276)

London empathized with Johnson: with Jeffries "no matter how hard Johnson wanted to, he would find it impossible to engage in witty repartee with a man who won't open his head" (*Reports*, 276). For London and Johnson, manliness and worldliness involved not only physical performance but also fair play, verbal acumen, and "fun."

When London, in the days leading up to the Reno fight, greeted Jeffries, whom he had earlier covered against Gus Ruhlin, he was hugely disappointed: "So forbidding was his expression that speech froze on my lips. It was an awkward half minute. So taken aback was I that I could not think of a blessed thing to say, while all the time I was praying fervently for him to say something. He didn't." Jack London speechless and Jack London praying are two images difficult to reconcile with what we know of him. Jeffries's brusqueness was legendary, but London resented it, as he would have anything that could "freeze" his very speech: "when so received by an ordinary man one would be likely to say, 'You little, insignificant snipe, who are you to treat me in this fashion?' But you don't say it to Jeff." London closes this dispatch once again visualizing Johnson as "chief entertainer, whether in making music, playing games, presiding at mock trials or spinning yarns. And always his voice is raised to others, inviting them to kick in and have a good time" (*Reports*, 280–81).[50] London himself evidently spent time raising his voice and his glass in Johnson's "camp." By July 1 we hear: "A wonderful fighter, indeed, is Johnson, unlike any other fighter, a type by himself" (285). In his camp Johnson entertained with wine, women, and song, often his own songs played on the fiddle and sung by him: "I've Got Rings on My Fingers," "By the Light of the Silvery Moon," and "I Love My Wife, but Oh, You Kid." As Finis Farr notes, he also "clowned for the reporters and obliged them by falling in with the traditional vein of melon-devouring, chicken-stealing humor that was regarded

by whites as appropriate to his color."[51] Like London, Johnson performed racial identity.

At last it was July 4, and the fight was on. London opens his story:

> Once again has Johnson sent down to defeat the chosen representative of the white race, and this time the greatest of them all. And, as of old, it was play for Johnson. From the opening to the closing round he never ceased his witty sallies, his exchanges of repartee with his opponent's seconds and with the spectators. And, for that matter, Johnson had a funny thing to say to Jeffries in every round. The golden smile was as much in evidence as ever, and neither did it freeze on his face nor did it vanish. It came and went throughout the fight spontaneously, naturally. (*Reports*, 293)

Johnson confidently "played and fought a white man in a white man's country, before a white man's crowd," and he answered taunts with "Chesterfieldian grace" (*Reports*, 294). Here again London's focus is upon Johnson's winning speech and "naturally" occurring smile, even before describing his boxing moves. When he does turn to the fighting, he sees that Jeffries had no chance. Johnson entered the ring at 2:30 PM,

> airy, happy, and smiling, greeting friends and acquaintances here, there, and everywhere in the audience, cool as ice. . . with never a signal flown of hesitancy nor timidity. Yet he was keyed up, keenly observant of all that was going on, even hearing much of the confused babble of tongues about him—hearing, ay, and understanding too. There is nothing heavy or primitive about this man Johnson. He is alive and quivering, every nerve fiber in his body and brain, withal that it is hidden, so artfully, or naturally, under that poise of facetious calm of his. He is a marvel of sensitiveness, sensibility and perceptibility. He has a perfect mechanism of mind and body. His mind works like a chain lightning and his body obeys with equal swiftness. (*Reports*, 295)

In contrast to the strategically maneuvering Johnson, "'Primordial Jeffries' . . . sat down in his corner. . . . The man of iron, the grizzly giant was grim and serious. The man of summer temperament smiled and smiled. That is the story of the whole fight" (*Reports*, 296).[52]

London's coverage of the fight focuses almost entirely on Johnson. In the first ten rounds Johnson's rushes are "fierce and dandy." Johnson was the victor in each round, for he "held his own in the clinches, . . . unhurt and . . . smiling all the way" (*Reports*, 299). Jeffries is knocked out by the punch he never

believed Johnson possessed—by the left, and not by the right. Though London says this was not the Jeff of old,

> Even so, it is to be doubted if the old Jeff could have put away this amazing Negro from Texas, this black man with the unfailing smile, this king of fighters and monologists. . . . Johnson is a wonder. No one understands him, this man who smiles. Well, the story of the fight is the story of smile. If ever a man won by nothing more fatiguing than a smile, Johnson won to-day. And now where is the champion who will make Johnson extend himself, who will glaze those bright eyes, remove that smile and silence that golden repartee? (*Reports*, 300–301)

With his admiration for "mouth fighting," one wonders whether London really did wish that smile to be removed and the voice of his fellow "monologist" silenced. London seems to be mocking his earlier conclusion to the 1908 Johnson-Burns coverage, when he called Jeffries to come off the alfalfa farm and bring down Johnson/Mont Blanc. His qualifier "*And now*" is the key—there really wasn't anyone, and everyone knew it.

LONDON'S FICTIONAL JOHNSON: "THE MEXICAN" (1911)

"The Night-Born" and *The Abysmal Brute* were both written just after the 1910 fight and published in 1910 and 1913 respectively, both indictments of the "fight-game." In "The Night-Born" London opposes "man-meanness" of the city to his conception of the purity of nature. But of London's writings inspired by the 1910 fight, "The Mexican," first published in the *Saturday Evening Post* in 1911, most reflects his experiences with Johnson. London displaces Johnson's African Americanness through a Latino character who is also a racial underdog and assigns Johnson's golden smile to the white fighter Danny Ward, not exactly a Great White Hope. The Mexican character allows London to advance prorevolutionary socialist views, but again the whites are unsympathetic losers. In this story London promotes the point of view of the nonwhite Other as a young revolutionary, Felipe Rivera; it also invokes racial and class injustice and critiques U.S. attitudes toward Mexicans and the Mexican Revolution. It is a multilayered, carefully paced tale that intercuts flashbacks of Rivera's past in Mexico, his visions of the future revolution, and his location in the brutal present of the Los Angeles boxing ring. As part of a new genre it delivers a spare, suspenseful, blow-by-blow fight story. Nowhere does London narrate boxing better than in "The Mexican," or make it mean so much.

"Nobody knew his history," the story begins (*Stories*, 1983), this strange intense boy whom his fellow revolutionaries fear as "the breath of death," a "wild wolf," a "primitive" (1986–87)—an appropriate beginning for a story of survival. As in "Mauki," London sets up the reader to dislike and fear Felipe, using this time the point of view of the junta. He then demolishes that point of view with Anglo-Saxon boxers and fight handlers' grotesque racial hatred of Felipe, emotionally contrasting with Rivera's flashbacks to the massacre of his family at the hands of Díaz's soldiers. The junta's fear and ignorance ironically parallels the inability of the whites to know Felipe Rivera.

As Jeff Jaeckle has observed, "Rivera is a living paradox: a collection of irreconcilable personality traits that culminate in a largely unknown but yet undeniably dominant character," existing within a "world of contradiction," in setting, diction, and narration: "Ultimately, these patterns of paradox echo Naturalist concerns with knowledge, as characters and readers find themselves perpetually confronted with their own ignorance."[53] Though Rivera walks into the junta office in Los Angeles and volunteers to work for the revolution doing anything that will help, Paulino Vera and his comrades distrust him: "There was no smile on his lips, no geniality in his eyes" (*Stories*, 1983), which were "savage as a wild tiger's." The others think he would kill anyone who opposed him (1985). He may be "the Revolution incarnate, ... the destroying angel moving through the still watches of the night" (1987). Instead of the zeal of "honest, ordinary revolutionists whose fiercest hatred of Diaz and his tyranny after all was only that of honest and ordinary patriots," this ragged boy strikes Vera and the others as menacing, "the Unknown" (1984). "He has no heart. He is pitiless as steel, keen and cold as frost. He is like moonshine in a winter night when a man freezes to death on some lonely mountain top," one character observes (1986). He is only a slender boy of eighteen, but he works harder than any man, his eyes burning "like cold fire, as with a vast, concentrated bitterness" (1983). References to Johnson are for the most part reversed: London called Johnson a "tiger," and Felipe is one too, yet he has no smile, his eyes are cold, he does not talk, he is not joking around. Rivera is an anti-Johnson in certain ways but a politicized Johnson in others.

As Jaeckle aptly notes: "fire is not supposed to be cold," yet through such oppositions Rivera is able to act. Jaekle sees a high incidence of the words "know" and "no" in the story, negation appearing every forty-seven words on average in the 9,366 words of the story. Words referring to knowledge are often coupled with the negative, as in "Nobody knew his history." Jaeckle also notes

how the structural pattern of the story, told as it is in four parts, forms a set of shifting points of view on the mystery of Rivera, as each section displays the ignorance of the narrative point of view, contrasting with the few incidences of Rivera's inner knowledge, in his flashbacks to Mexico while he is fighting Danny Ward, and with his inner aim to buy guns, not just "win." Parts 1 and 2 are told from the point of view of the junta members; parts 3 and 4 from members of the boxing world. The story is divided among these false portraits of Rivera.[54] When we put together Rivera's internal reality with the narrator's disdain for Rivera's observers, we can appreciate London's multiple visions of racism in this story, as well as the general truth of human beings not being able to "know" one another, a theme that increasingly appeared in London's stories after the *Snark* voyage.

The activities of the junta include strategizing, sending out spies, and writing letters.[55] Yet the main activity Rivera engages in is fighting white men through his sense of revenge and his actions to address it. Ironically, despite his taciturnity, he is the junta's expert on communication with the revolutionaries in Mexico, undertaking a dangerous journey to Baja California to set up lines of communication. Characters in London's works who communicate are often figures of the artist, and the trickster-stylist Rivera is no exception. He ultimately finds his way really to communicate—to matter in the world—through the boxing ring.

Identifying with Rivera in the story—and London doesn't give readers an alternative—means understanding why he fights: not for money, nor even to punish his gringo opponents, but for justice for the damage done to his family and his country. His memories of injustice, a childhood spent in slavery, and the murder of his parents and his entire village on the Río Blanco, are juxtaposed with the present, especially in his final fight in the ring:[56]

> He saw the white-walled, water-power factories of Rio Blanco. He saw the six thousand workers, starved and wan, and the little children, seven and eight years of age, who toiled long shifts for ten cents a day. He saw the perambulating corpses, the ghastly death's heads of men who labored in the dye-rooms. (*Stories*, 1995–96)

He recalls that his father, "[b]ig, hearty Joaquin Fernandez," called the dye-rooms on this deathly river of whiteness "suicide holes." "[L]arge, big-moustached and deep-chested, kindly above all men, who loved all men and whose heart was so large that there was love to overflowing still left for the mother and the little muchacho playing in the corner of the patio," Fernandez

was a writer and printer who worked for the revolution. (Felipe Rivera's real name is "Juan Fernandez.") He used to watch his father setting type in the "little printery, or scribbling endless hasty, nervous lines on the much-cluttered desk," carrying on midnight meetings. Then came the strike, the lock-outs, and eventually the "death-spitting rifles" of Díaz's soldiers—a horrific end of childhood: "He saw the flat cars, piled high with the bodies of the slain, consigned to Vera Cruz, food for the sharks of the bay. Again he crawled over the grisly heaps, seeking and finding, stripped and mangled, his father and mother. His mother he especially remembered—only her face projecting, her body burdened by the weight of dozens of bodies" (*Stories*, 1996). "'His soul has been seared,'" May Sethby unknowingly imagines; "'Light and laughter have been burned out of him. He is like one dead, and yet is fearfully alive'" (1985).

Rivera's "art" and his desire for justice are compellingly contrasted with the junta's complacency, but even more so with the unscrupulous fight promoters and their main client, favorite of the fans and pride of the Anglo-Saxons, Danny Ward. The promoters are drunks with stereotypical Irish names like Michael Kelly and Spider Hagerty, but to Rivera, Ward is "the whitest Gringo of them all" (*Stories*, 1994), a big, loud, crowd-pleasing fighter, never without his famous smile, interested in the purse and the pleasures it would bring. Wherever he arrives, he brings with him "a gusty draught of geniality, good-nature, and all-conqueringness." Like Johnson, Danny is a "good actor"; beneath his geniality "he was the deliberate, cold-blooded fighter and business man." The rest "was a mask" (1991). When Danny enters the ring, the roar of the crowd interrupts Rivera's memory of the village massacre: "The house was in a wild uproar for the popular hero who was bound to win. Everybody proclaimed him. . . . His face continually spread to an unending succession of smiles. . . . Never was there so genial a fighter. His face was a running advertisement of good feeling, of good fellowship. He knew everybody." But crossing the ring to Rivera's corner, he whispers to Rivera: "'You little Mexican rat,' hissed from between Danny's gaily smiling lips, 'I'll fetch the yellow outa you.'" As things turn out, however, as they did with Johnson's opponents, "It was not a fight. It was a slaughter, a massacre" (*Stories*, 1997).

Jack Johnson is present in this story in contradictory ways, mostly as the hero in the struggle for victory as justice and an underdog's triumph, but he is also there in Danny. In "The Mexican," the smile belongs to the white man, and Felipe's taciturnity falsely "reveals" to the fight audience the "primitiveness" of the Latino. But there is another reversal of stereotypes: Danny is the crudity

and Rivera the "perfect mechanism of mind and body," as London called Johnson (*Reports*, 295). Danny "mouth fights," yet his puerilities hardly compare to Johnson's jokes or Rivera's sense of silent commitment. Danny returns to his corner "smiling through all desperateness and extremity. 'The smile that won't come off!' somebody yelled; and the audience laughed loudly in its relief." On the other hand, Rivera's "Indian blood, as well as Spanish" allows him to sit back in a corner, "silent, immobile, only his black eyes passing from face to face and noting everything" (*Stories*, 1992). Danny's "man-eating attack" may seem at first to envelop Rivera, but after two minutes "the whirling, blurring mix-up ceased suddenly. Rivera stood alone. Danny, the redoubtable Danny, lay on his back" (1999). Danny rises, trying all of his dirty tricks, and he bitterly curses Rivera, the "'greaser,'" as the house yells at Rivera to take the licking that he is supposed to take. Lean and graceful, Rivera dances around his lumbering opponent, like Johnson with Jeffries, staying as much out of Danny's clumsy reach as he can, but taking dozens of blows. As Danny rallies for the last time in the seventeenth round, the crowd bellows its frustration at Rivera much as it did at Johnson: "'Why don't you fight?' it demanded wrathfully of Rivera. 'You're yellow! You're yellow!' 'Open up, you cur! Open up!' 'Kill 'm, Danny! Kill 'm.' You sure got 'm! Kill 'm!'" Rivera catches Danny off-guard, and fells him with "a clean drive to the mouth" (2004). With the crowd demanding his blood, Rivera gets in the last blow seconds before the police chief and the referee grab and stop him. He demands a count and the victory:

> "Who wins?" Rivera demanded. Reluctantly, the referee caught his gloved hand and held it aloft.
>
> There were no congratulations for Rivera. He walked to his corner unattended, where his seconds had not yet placed his stool. He leaned backward on the ropes and looked his hatred at them, swept it on and about him until the whole ten thousand Gringos were included. His knees trembled under him, and he was sobbing from exhaustion. Before his eyes the hated faces swayed back and forth in the giddiness of nausea. Then he remembered they were the guns. The guns were his. The Revolution could go on. (*Stories*, 2005)

Rivera's victory is booed, and Danny's sloppy defeat is mourned. In the end the revolution triumphs, the sounds of the "death-spitting rifles" Rivera will buy drowning out Danny's insults and the "war-chant of wolves" from the crowd. Though he is once described as a "lamb led to the slaughter" (*Stories*, 1994), Rivera manages to save the revolution without being sacrificed.

In every encounter with gringos Rivera's "eyes would turn, boring like gimlets of incandescent ice, disconcerting and perturbing" (*Stories*, 1985). London uses Rivera's eyes to stand in for Johnson's "perturbing" smile. His eyes have power to disturb—and to *win*. Rivera's style work is silent instead of verbal, but he has his wits about him, while Danny's stupidity is most evident in his awkward, ugly mouth fighting. Though Jeffries was the inarticulate one, Rivera's silent anger speaks of his grit, nerve, and inner fiber. He sees the promoters and fighters as objects just as they see him, and he beats them at their own game. His manager grudgingly admits: "Just a born fighter, and tough beyond belief. He's a piece of ice. And he never talked eleven words in a string since I know him. He saws wood and does his work" (*Stories*, 1991).[57] Rivera holds himself above those who would oppress him, and like London and Johnson he knows that a smile could only go so far, and that work—their performances—were needed, what they had to "say," as it were: "the atmosphere of foredoomed defeat in his own corner had no effect on him. His handlers were Gringos and strangers. Also they were scrubs—the dirty driftage of the fight game, without honor, without efficiency" (1995).

THE TWO JACKS

Jack Johnson and Jack London comprise an intriguing cultural pairing in early twentieth-century America. Their individual radicalisms placed them in opposition to commonplace moralisms of race politics. They are in many ways as unlikely a pair of heroes as Americans have ever had, but within their contradictions, imperfections, and failures lies their greatness.

Many Americans have paid tribute to Jack Johnson, including James Weldon Johnson, Ralph Ellison, Miles Davis, Howard Sackler, John A. Williams, Jervis Anderson, Ishmael Reed, A. J. Liebling, and Norman Mailer. At least three well-known paintings of the period were probably inspired by Johnson: George Bellows's magnificent *Both Members of the Club* (1909), which shows a black boxer burying his face in a white boxer's chest, each covered with blood, being gawked at by grotesque faces at ringside; Benjamin Luks's smaller but still powerful *The Boxing Match* (1910), which follows a similar theme; and Isaac Israël's Dadaist "The Negro Boxer" (1914). Johnson is probably the inspiration for the "wonderful nigger" prizefighter, the "awful noble-looking nigger" discussed by Jake Barnes and Bill Gorton in *The Sun Also Rises*, who gets into trouble by making a defiant speech.[58] The greatest athlete of his day, Johnson

paid for his achievement with jail time and his career. But he helped make possible the victories of later black fighters; it is hard to imagine Muhammad Ali without Johnson before him. When Ali joined the Nation of Islam he told a press conference, sounding like both Johnson and London, "I only fight to make a living, and when I have enough money I won't fight anymore. . . . I know where I'm going and I know the truth, and I don't have to be what you want me to be. I'm free to be what I want."[59] "The real Jack Johnson," Randy Roberts concludes, "was not a stereotype," nor was he the type of black hero longed for by reformers. Whereas Ali was able to be politically black, sixty years earlier Johnson's political attitude never crystallized and remained in internal confusion:

> His hatred of the white world was almost as deep as his longing to be part of it. Although he was admired by thousands of blacks during his own day, he refused the responsibility of leadership, and he could not lead by example for to follow his example was to court disaster. On only one point was Johnson consistent throughout his life; he accepted no limitations. He was not bound by custom, background, or race. He saw no inconsistency in ridiculing a white boxer in the ring and then celebrating with white friends. And if his conquest of white women was part of a desire to humiliate the white race, it was also because he preferred white women to black women. He was not a simple man. Johnson's greatest strength was also his most glaring weakness. His life was the result of a supreme ego. It was everything.[60]

Johnson deserves respect, argues Roberts, because he faced a "sea of white hatred" without showing fear, and he refused to consider himself a second-class citizen. Like Ali, "he wrote the rules of his own life."[61] Jack London, whose tribute to Johnson's heavyweight victories is the most extensive of all, also wrote his own rules. If he never got race "right," he furnished us with a more complex set of responses to race than any writer of his day, his Johnson coverage a dramatic example of cross-racial identification and other complications. London seems to have needed something very important from blackness, just as Johnson thought he needed something from whiteness.

Johnson and London were two enigmas, two artists, two all-time champion mouth fighters.

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SIX

A "'Good Indian'"?

Race as Class in *Martin Eden*

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Since its publication a century ago, London's semiautobiographical *Martin Eden* (1909) has been translated into dozens of languages, has been read by millions, and has inspired countless writers. Yet it is a mixed achievement. From the month of its publication until London died seven years later, he had to defend or explain it against interpretations he saw as contrary to his purpose, and its meaning has remained a matter of controversy. Even career London scholars confess puzzlement at its philosophical conflicts or find it difficult to teach, either because of its conflict between individualism and socialism or because students are puzzled at Martin's rejection of the good life his rags-to-riches story has provided him. It has been the subject of fine essays such as those by Sam S. Baskett, Joseph R. McElrath Jr., María DeGuzmán and Debbie López, and Young Min Kim.[1] Yet no one has produced sustained analysis of the continued presence of class as symbolized by race in this novel. Doing so further illuminates patterns of race in London's career and also furnishes a new reading of *Martin Eden*'s "philosophical" conflicts.

The many letters London wrote to explain his purpose bear witness to competing readings.[2] To Fannie K. Hamilton, wife of a socialist friend and mentor, Frank Strawn Hamilton, London wrote on December 6, 1909, just after the book's publication, to inquire as to whether they had received their advance copy. Perhaps their earlier remarks on its publication put him on his socialist defensive: "Martin Eden died because he was so made," he explained. "He was an individualist. He was unaware of the needs of others. He worked for himself, for fame, for love, for all self-satisfactions. When these illusions vanished, there was nothing to live for. Ergo, he died. But had he taken Neal [sic] Brissenden's advice and tied himself to life by embracing socialism, he would have found there were a few million others to live & fight for, etc., etc." (*Letters*, 847). Notwithstanding London's ideological commitment, the "etc., etc."

is a flimsy conclusion for what would become one of his most dogged arguments about interpretation of his work. The lack of specificity of "etc., etc." inconclusively concludes London's "party line"; perhaps wishing to sound offhandedly unrehearsed for those who might criticize the book, he turns to the form of organizational discourse he usually employs in his handwritten notes for a novel or story, sketchily connecting disparate story ideas or possible events with "etc., etc." or long dashes. But most tellingly, "etc., etc." betrays authorial negligence, a device to which writers or speakers resort when they are trying to emphasize a point but are out of evidence. Perhaps this novel embodied more of his own internal conflicts that he was comfortable in recognizing. Carolyn Johnston says that in *Martin Eden* "socialism could not be reconciled with his emotional needs for aesthetic experience, individualism, racism, and longing for strong comrades."[3] That readers have consistently identified London with Martin has helped create, among other things, the myth of London's suicide, but Martin's suicide has an emotional rightness to it that no amount of authorial intention can undo. Readers tend to be in Martin's corner as much as they were in Felipe Rivera's in "The Mexican." The narrating of Martin's character is just too strong not to draw sympathy.[4]

Aside from the problem of the relative unattractiveness of the socialists London offers in the novel—mouthy Bay Area intellectuals, shriveled immigrants from the ghettoes, or Martin's friend Russ Brissenden, an alcoholic, consumptive wastrel, and despite his professed socialism at heart an elitist—the main disconnect in London's defense of the novel's purpose is that readers observe that unlike Brissenden Martin is *not* "unaware of the needs of others," as London claimed to the Hamiltons. If anything, he is the most "socialistic" character in the book, if we interpret socialism broadly as ethical care for one's fellow men and women. Unlike the speakers at the socialist meeting Brissenden takes him to, or the animalistic mobs of the neighborhood Martin wishes to escape, Martin's sense of brother- and sisterhood is supported by his practical egalitarian actions, from helping Maria Silva with her washing to treating her children to ice cream to assisting them in more significant ways in their dreams of prosperity. His kindness and compassion for those less fortunate than he, especially the Silva family, ironically results in his mixing with them in ways that threaten his identity as a white man, contributing to his loss of Ruth Morse. Like the protagonist of Twain's "The Story of the Good Little Boy Who Did Not Prosper," no matter how Martin Eden tries to follow the rules to pass into a higher social class, he, like his Adamic namesake, is doomed by

naturalistic circumstances he does not understand and over which he learns he has no control.

As late as April 1915 London complained that criticisms of his lack of social message in *Martin Eden* were unfounded: rather, it was an "indictment" of "the superman philosophy of Nietzsche and of modern German ideas, . . . showing that where love does not reside, resides only death" (*Letters*, 1439). Had Martin been a socialist, London repeats, he would not have died. Perhaps London was out of touch with how others would react to his hero, since the book was written far away from Oakland's and San Francisco's urban ills while at sea on the *Snark*. Though one early reviewer in the *Dial* objected to Martin's "turbulent egotism" as evidence of the author's "perverted idealism," many people read then and still read this novel as a tragic struggle of its sympathetic and heroic protagonist rather than a case study in what one's politics should be.[5] It has almost never been viewed even by socialist critics as the persuasive testament to socialism London hoped it would be.[6] London's socialism could and did accommodate the strong individual, such as Ernest Everhard of *The Iron Heel*, and he found attractive the individualistic socialism as espoused by Oscar Wilde.[7] Yet if *Martin Eden* had been read as a socialist novel, Jonathan Harold Spinner points out, it would have been as "one of the first novels that document the disintegration of the American success story, the final collapse of the Horatio Alger lesson, the great fall of the Gospel of Wealth myth," an "existential drama of the modern anti-hero."[8] Though its appeal largely lies in its romanticism, Robert Barltrop also argues that it was a modernist book ahead of its time, an existential search that concludes that all is meaningless. If it were rejected in its own day for its pessimism, it would have fit the temper of the times admirably post–World War I, alongside the novels of Hemingway and Fitzgerald. Barltrop finds such artistic prescience in London's fiction to be, ironically, one of the reasons much of his work has been traditionally "denied literary importance."[9]

The possibility in this novel that values can be reversed or subverted from what they first appear to be is first suggested in repetitive images such as Martin's gazing into various mirrors, symbolizing the issue of false appearances versus inner integrity, and how values, like identities, can be put on and off. Martin's crippling "double-consciousness" of class and race eventually drives him to suicide for relief. W. E. B. DuBois's now-famous phrase describes the inner contradictions of African Americans, but it is appropriate to *Martin Eden*: the major complicating factor in Martin's identity is not only a philosophical conflict

between individualism and socialism, but his own "racial" identity as a marker of class. Race in *Martin Eden* is a metaphor for identity, class position, and masculinity, underlying not only the novel's problem of class but also Martin's sense of identity itself, and, further, his evolution of an identity as an author.

Race is something of a shadow value in *Martin Eden*, but it is always present, from the endless references to skin color, whiteness, darkness, and, more importantly, the binaries between Martin, darkened and marginalized by his work and class, and the white upper world of power and success into which he wishes to pass ("*Success*" was London's original title for the book). One reason the novel's conflicts have not been easy to unravel is because the role of race in the book has not been adequately understood or even observed. Martin is not just of the wrong class—he is further marked as an Other to the Morses and their world by his toil-darkened skin; a century ago dark skin meant identity as either the working class or nonwhite. Also, because as a sailor Martin has been all over the world, they fear he has consorted with racial Others. An ironic mirror of Ernest Darling, Martin ends up trying to do everything to "go native" and become a white upper-middle-class man, but he cannot finally succeed in passing. Martin's being of a different spiritual "race" also marks him as an artist, apart from the shallow and weak minds he discovers in the upper as well as lower classes around him. For this new Adam such an artist's paradise could prove in the end to be the real home, but Martin ultimately is incapable of finding it.

Surprisingly, only a few scholars have commented on Martin Eden's focus upon darkening and lightening, most notably DeGuzmán and López, who describe Martin's fair skin "blackened" by a life of toil as an emblem of Martin's vacillating between classes and racial identities: "Like Martin's rolling seaman's gait . . . the novel is a narrative that heaves and plunges between seemingly diametrical aesthetic, philosophical, psychological, and sociopolitical oppositions. . . . The ultimate algebraic ploy of the narrative is not merely to balance two sides of an equation, but to turn positives into negatives and, moreover, constants into variables."[10] Addressing Martin's hope of undergoing a "transvaluation of values" within class, race, and gender issues in the novel, they focus on the "entwined variables of race and gender because these have so often been treated as unsavory constraints in London's work, considered racist and misogynist."[11] *Martin Eden* "portrays for a middle- and upper-class audience a working-class man's fight to better himself and his conditions. The novel marks as 'other' this purportedly Anglo white man who becomes the object of a blonde, blue-eyed bourgeois woman's fascination."[12]

How fitting that the first poet Martin hears of in the Morse home is the fallen English aristocrat Algernon Charles Swinburne, admired by late Victorians for his superb poetic meter and exquisite sentiment but also sensationalized for his romantic nihilism, blasphemous attacks on Christianity, sexual deviance, and alcoholic suicide. Partaking of both the romantic passion and the politics of Blake, Shelley, and Keats, Swinburne re-created certain features of Renaissance courtly love poetry, especially the idea that for the poet the beloved woman is a destructive force. That Swinburne, the morally outcast poet, is a central figure in Ruth Morse's early literary conversation is a sardonic joke that no one in the novel really gets. Is Martin's dream of respectability as a writer a rebellion against society, or is it one against himself that will lead to self-destruction? Martin's first pronunciation of the poet's name is "Swineburn," quickly corrected by Ruth, but a reminder of the true alienation of the artist Martin will experience, an animalistic but potentially productive naturalist condition Thomas R. Tietze and Gary Riedl, following Martin's own self-description, call being a "'saint in slime.'"[13]

Anna Strunsky Walling summed up the contradictions that emerge in the artist Martin when she wrote of London:

> Our friendship can be described as a struggle—constantly I strained to reach that in him which I felt he was "born to be." I looked for the Social Democrat, the Revolutionist, the moral and romantic idealist; I sought the Poet. . . . He was a Socialist, but he wanted to beat the Capitalist at his own game. To succeed in doing this, he thought, was in itself a service to the Cause; to "show them" that Socialists were not derelicts and failures had certain propaganda value. So he succeeded—became a kind of Napoleon of the pen. This dream of his, even when projected and before it became a reality, was repellent to me. The greatest natures, I thought, the surest Social Democrats, would be incapable of harboring it. To pile up wealth, or personal success—surely anybody who was a beneficiary of the Old Order must belong to it to some extent in spirit and in fact! . . . I never doubted the beauty and the warmth and the purity of his own nature—but as to the ideas and principles which he invited to guide his life. They were not worthy of him, I thought; they belittled him and eventually they might eat away his strength and grandeur.[14]

The Nietzschean dream of becoming a "Napoleon of the pen" Martin pursues is an artistic self that could by well-crafted self-expression transcend personal constraints. But like Napoleon's, Martin's dreams harbor fatal flaws, which

eventually overthrow his "empery of his mind" (*Martin Eden*, 23) for a death far from home. That Martin dies between "homes" is a fitting symbol of his identity conflicts and his failure to pass. The society Martin aspires to join is flawed, but within the Adamic, innocent Martin himself there is a fatal "flaw" as well, a more Evelike one: resistance. Martin resists the selves others try to make him into, even unto death. As Spinner has noted, "Eden refuses to be objectivized, to be made an 'it' by others," whether by Ruth and her world, by the celebrity machine that seems to own him, or by others such as Brissenden and his socialists.[15] Martin resists even when the results of his own dream come true, because though he has been able to pass in terms of class, his interior reality as an artist now makes him another kind of outsider, still with no home or tribe to fit into. Though he resists, he is ultimately unable to turn resistance into a viable identify of its own.

Johnston sees Martin Eden as "an individualist temperamentally because of his fierce desire to succeed as a writer." For London the word "individualist," she says, "means one who focuses primarily upon himself," as Nietzsche taught, arguing for a higher individual above what he called "slave morality." Yet, as she notes, Martin is merely "self-conscious, but not ruthless like Wolf Larsen. . . . He dies not because of his individualism, but as a result of his self-consciousness and his disgust over the pure visions he sees and cannot communicate in a materialistic society. . . . Eden's tragedy is that he is not Nietzschean enough."[16] Martin's compassion is a result not only of his class origins and struggle but also a feature of the artist's vision that comprehends a broader picture of society, transcending hierarchies and hegemonies, just as London developed a larger picture of race relations on the *Snark* voyage. Sadly, in trying to accommodate himself to the upper-middle-class world he wishes to pass into, Martin murders the only thing that really defines him: his unique identity and point of view as an artist. Instead of finding his position in society and thereby his true voice or "perspective," as London described his own moment of self-discovery in the Yukon, Martin chooses oblivion, like the suicidal heroines—not heroes—of his day, Kate Chopin's Edna Pontellier or Edith Wharton's Lily Bart.

"PASSING" IN *MARTIN EDEN*

In *Martin Eden*'s racial crossing, the usual formula has been changed: Martin is already considered white and attempts to pass into a higher class—to be whiter

still. In this "higher world" class is in large part expressed and defended in terms of lightening and darkening of skin, and in the novel this issue is taken up in situation, setting, characters, atmosphere, imagery, and dialogue. Becoming educated, achieving the love of his ideal woman, and becoming a writer are all contingent, Martin believes, on becoming higher class to attain the whiter-than-white Ruth. If there are many references to his dark color, "bronze," or "sunburnt" or even "black," to remind the reader that his quest to pass will be futile, his hopes for the "American Dream" frustrated by barriers less easily crossed than these from obscurity to fame, Martin attempts to whiten his teeth and body but also to "pass" into respectability by writing. The tragedy is not that Martin fails in his aspirations but that, having failed to pass, he is not then able to find an authentic voice from within the ferment of his participations in different classes and locales. Withstanding the social pressures around him would have allowed him truly to realize his "empery of the mind." Class passing in *Martin Eden* is narrated through a racializing binary of whiteness and blackness that ultimately destroys everything Martin loves. In the end he achieves the impossible state of utter whiteness only in death, as he sinks into the dark waters of the Pacific like "a white statue" (*Martin Eden*, 410).

The Pacific here stands in for the racial "house" Martin desperately tries to regain, but it is a house that proves to be only another paradise lost. As London finished *Martin Eden* he was on the *Mariposa* on the way home in a break from his *Snark* voyage to settle financial affairs in California. That Martin dreams of returning specifically to Nuku Hiva in the Marquesas is interesting, since they stand for the loss of paradise, but are also emblematic of the results of white colonialism the Londons saw there and would see as they sailed farther west, and emblematic of the death of Melville's Typee.

Narratives of passing go back a long way in American literature, following the racial diversity of the developing country. They grew in popularity in the mid-nineteenth century, with Harriet E. Wilson, William Wells Brown, and Lydia Maria Child, and became an increasingly characteristic genre for turn-of-the-century novels by Pauline Hopkins, Frances Harper, Charles Chesnutt, Abraham Cahan, Anzia Yezierska, James Weldon Johnson, and George S. Schuyler. Not all passing narratives were written by racial minorities, as demonstrated by the work of Melville, Twain, William Dean Howells, George Washington Cable, Gertrude Stein, Kate Chopin, and Edgar Rice Burroughs, among many others. It is appropriate that the United States, a country of "passers" in so many respects, should have a strong tradition in this genre.

An especially telling comparison with *Martin Eden* as a novel of passing is Johnson's *Autobiography of an Ex-Coloured Man* (1912), exemplifying, as does London's novel, the most salient features of DuBois's "double consciousness," and, specifically for the artist, the sense

> of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others. . . . One feels his twoness— . . . two souls, two thoughts, two unreconciled strivings; two warring ideals in one dark body, whose dogged strength alone keeps it from being torn asunder. The history of the American Negro is the history of this strife,—this longing to attain self-conscious manhood, to merge his double self into a better and truer self. In this merging he wishes neither of the older selves to be lost.[17]

DuBois could have been describing Martin in this famous passage, for, in certain respects, Martin resembles the key figure in passing narratives, the tragic mulatto or mulatta who finds no home on either side of the race line. Andrew Furer has observed the similarity between Martin and Johnson's Ex-Coloured Man, claiming that in both works "'double-consciousnesses' of race and class both reinforce[s] and subvert[s] societal norms," as the "artist of marginal race or class struggles to find a viable position not only among races and classes, but between art and commerce as well." Both Martin and the Ex-Coloured Man realize they have "close[d] off freedoms and creative opportunities" in their desires for white, upper-middle-class existence. The Ex-Coloured Man, despite his passing, is impoverished of his artistic integrity at the end: "His only opportunity to exploit America's . . . potential for a fructifying cultural hybridity of race and class had been as a musician who would have combined classical music with black American folk music to create works that would not only show the powerful creative potentialities inherent in African Americans' double-consciousness but would appeal to all classes, by virtue of their mixture of lowbrow, middlebrow, and highbrow forms."[18]

Martin too finds himself unable to create from a successfully integrated point of view once he passes into the Morses' class. Prompted by loneliness, he decides to try to re-experience his own class and attends the Bricklayers' Picnic at Shell Mound. Among his old friends he feels only disgust, directed in particular to his former girlfriend Lizzie Connolly: "He had traveled far, too far to go back. Their mode of life, which had once been his, was now distasteful to him. . . . He had developed into an alien. . . . He had exiled himself. . . . He had found no new home. . . . the gang could not have understood him. . . . his own family could not understand him . . . [and] the bourgeoisie could not under-

stand him" (*Martin Eden* 363). Martin again tries to judge appearances: in the frequent gazes into his mirror, peering into the painting at the Morse home, scouring newspaper reports about himself, staring at his publicity photos, and looking into the surfaces of water. Unfortunately, his fixation on surfaces also means that he is projecting himself onto Ruth's surface. Her whiteness makes her his visual confirmation of his worth, and on her surface he dreams his dreams. When she fails at containing and projecting back his desired self-image, he is bereft of identity. In a sense, Ruth too could be read as a victim of projections of racial anxieties onto an Other.[19]

MARTIN DISCOVERS HIS DARKNESS

In the opening scene in which Martin first visits the Morse home, he feels grotesquely out of place. His discomfort is initially signaled through his observance of Arthur Morse, the young man of the house whom Martin has just rescued from an attack by hoodlums, especially how easily Arthur navigates parlor and drawing room, contrasted with the sailor's gait Martin tries to manage. His corporeality is further marked by his "bronze" color and his breaking into a sweat: "He experienced a momentary pang of shame that he should walk so uncouthly. The sweat burst through the skin of his forehead in tiny beads, and he paused and mopped his bronzed face with his handkerchief. . . . [I]n the eyes there was an expression such as wild animals betray when they fear the trap. He was surrounded by the unknown, apprehensive of what might happen, ignorant of what he should do" (*Martin Eden*, 2). Martin is not at home, and he will never be from this moment on, though he will be searching with all of his heart for it. Unlike Buck, who was also awkward at first, Martin will not fully adapt to his new world.

Martin is dazzled by the first appearance of Ruth Morse, "a pale, ethereal creature, with wide, spiritual blue eyes and a wealth of golden hair" (*Martin Eden*, 4). But before he can properly enjoy the apparition, his mind is jolted by other, darker memories:

> Immediately, beside her, on either hand, ranged the women he had known. . . . He saw the weak and sickly faces of the girls of the factories, and the simpering, boisterous girls from the south of Market. There were women of the cattle camps, and swarthy cigarette-smoking women of Old Mexico. These, in turn, were crowded out by Japanese women, doll-like, stepping mincingly on wooden

> clogs; by Eurasians, delicate featured, stamped with degeneracy; by full-bodied South-Sea-Island women, flower-crowned and brown-skinned. All these were blotted out by a grotesque and terrible nightmare brood—frowsy, shuffling creatures from the pavements of Whitechapel, gin-bloated hags of the stews, and all the vast hell's following of harpies, vile-mouthed and filthy, that under the guise of monstrous female form prey upon sailors, the scrapings of the ports, the scum and slime of the human pit. (*Martin Eden*, 4–5)

How quickly Martin's mind moves from Ruth to these dark-skinned women, "trans-valuing" them and her. Such a leap sexualizes Ruth and establishes Martin's masculinity, but it is also a sign of trouble to come: Martin cannot reconcile the racial, class, or gender binaries he confronts, and, like Swinburne, he unconsciously fears the "nightmare" of the female.

Ruth's thoughts turn carnal, and her focus is, tellingly, on his skin, the hands, neck, and figurative "skin" of clothes that mark his identity as "other," especially his neck:

> [S]he noted a scar on his cheek, another that peeped out from under the hair of the forehead, and a third that ran down and disappeared under the starched collar. She repressed a smile at sight of the red line that marked the chafe of the collar against the bronzed neck. He was evidently unused to stiff collars. Likewise her feminine eye took in the clothes he wore, the cheap and unaesthetic cut, the wrinkling of the coat across the shoulders, and the series of wrinkles in the sleeves that advertised bulging biceps muscles. . . .
>
> "You have such a scar on your neck, Mr. Eden," the girl was saying. "How did it happen? I am sure it must have been some adventure."
>
> "A Mexican with a knife, miss," he answered, moistening his parched lips and clearing his throat. "It was just a fight. After I got the knife away, he tried to bite off my nose." (*Martin Eden*, 6)

Martin's answer is both the sort of answer one would expect from him and also unexpectedly funny in its grotesque sexual symbolism, not to Martin, but probably to Ruth's family and definitely for the reader. We not only feel Martin's awkwardness, but we laugh at him. However, the point of view shifts quickly from sailor stereotypes toward allegiance with Martin and against the Morses. A missing nose symbolizes a loss of masculinity, from which Martin plainly does not suffer. His low status is defined not by the loss of masculinity but by having mixed with nonwhites, who have left their marks upon him, but this does not, at least until now, shame him. The scar that runs down

his neck and fascinates Ruth diminishes Martin's claim to white manhood. As DeGuzmán and López observe, because Martin "has consorted with what Anglo culture classified as non-white (Eurasians, South Sea Islanders, Mexicans, Hawaiians, even the Portuguese)," like Melville's Ahab "in the 'deadly scrimmage with the Spaniard afore the altar in Santa,' he has been indelibly marked as Other."[20] Martin's red scar, like Ahab's, is also a mark of his own tragic dividedness, as well as what DeGuzmán and López call "disfiguration of Otherness," which renders him both fascinating and repulsive to Ruth, "whose eyes and hands wander repeatedly to his neck."[21]

Ruth's training as a "daughter of the rich," as London would later title a play, has warned her "of peril and of wrong, subtle, mysterious, luring." Still, her instincts ring "clarion-voiced through her being, impelling her to hurdle caste and place and gain to this traveller from another world. . . . She was clean, and her cleanness revolted; but she was woman, and she was just beginning to learn the paradox of woman" (*Martin Eden*, 9). Just as Martin, given his class and "dark" subject position, cannot help but be captivated by Ruth's "light," so Ruth is drawn to his exoticized darkness:

> Her gaze rested for a moment on the muscular neck, heavy corded, almost bull-like, bronzed by the sun, spilling over with rugged health and strength. And though he sat there, blushing and humble, again she felt drawn to him. She was surprised by a wanton thought that rushed into her mind. It seemed to her that if she could lay her two hands upon that neck that all its strength and vigor would flow out to her. She was shocked by this thought. It seemed to reveal to her an undreamed depravity in her nature. (*Martin Eden*, 11)

Ruth's problem is not just that of a woman who experiences competing impulses: she also suffers the modernist paradox of identity that plagues Martin himself: how to be a fully white, middle-class, "real" American on the one hand, and how to be an authentic self on the other. Ruth's conflicting loyalties could have cast her into one of the many novels of New Women in her day; to appreciate her position it helps to remember that she suffers for it, not unlike New Women heroines.

When Martin first comes to know Ruth, he realizes the immediate barrier is his manner of speech, which will of course be the very thing he will develop in himself as a writer. But the first visit to the Morse home finds him silenced:

> He talked only when he had to, and then his speech was like his walk to the table, filled with jerks and halts as he groped in his polyglot vocabulary for words, de-

> bating over words he knew were fit but which he feared he could not pronounce, rejecting other words he knew would not be understood or would be raw and harsh. But all the time he was oppressed by the consciousness that this carefulness of diction was making a booby of him, preventing him from expressing what he had in him.

Sure enough, his true self slips out when he declines a dish "from the servant who interrupted and pestered at his shoulder, and he said, shortly and emphatically, 'Pow!'": "On the instant those at the table were keyed up and expectant, the servant was smugly pleased, and he was wallowing in mortification. But he recovered himself quickly. 'It's the Kanaka for "finish,"' he explained, 'and it just come out naturally. It's spelt p-a-u'"(*Martin Eden*, 18). Though Martin has a rich "polyglot" vocabulary, he muffles it. It is his self-consciousness that is his enemy, not the other people speaking. He is naturally "powerful of thought and sensibility" and creative, but because of his "mixed" life and languages he struggles for articulateness almost to the point of incoherence. He announces his mixed-ness—though he does not realize its import at the moment—through his own authentic voice by using a foreign and raced term like "*pau*." If "*Pau*" in Hawaiian means "finished," it is an ironic forecast of the eventual outcome of his quest for identity.

As he is so aware from the outset of his position as Other and of the work he will need to do to change, Martin works as hard as he can for his ultimate goal: "He wasn't of their tribe, and he couldn't talk their lingo. . . . He couldn't fake being their kind. The masquerade would fail, and besides, masquerade was foreign to his nature. There was no room in him for sham or artifice. Whatever happened, he must be real"(*Martin Eden*, 19). Martin muses that "He couldn't talk their talk just yet, though in time he would. Upon that he was resolved. But in the meantime, talk he must, and it must be his own talk, toned down, of course, so as to be comprehensible to them." He is aware that "each roughness of speech was an insult to her ear, each rough phase of his life an insult to her soul" (19).

Later, Ruth cannot easily shake off her mother's opinion that Martin is "an unclean sailor" stained by the "pitch" (e.g., sexually transmitted disease) with which he has "played" (*Martin Eden*, 164), and she is frightened. Observing the "fascinated horror" in her mother's eyes as Martin sits awkwardly in the Morse parlor, Ruth thinks, "This man from outer darkness was evil. Her mother saw it, and her mother was right" (21). But Ruth is as confused about

gender, race, and class ideologies as anyone else in this novel. After all, her name connotes loyalty and self-sacrifice. And London's unflattering portrait of the Morses' class prejudice is a reversal of his social Darwinist views. Ruth's class is portrayed as a race of shallow, anemic snobs like Ford of "The House of Pride." At the same time, the exemplars of Anglo-Saxon racial vitality in the novel—the average white working-class poor that Martin lives among, including his sister and brother-in-law—do not impress.

Hoping to find evidence that his destiny is among the upper reaches of society, Martin studies himself intently in the mirror:

> He wondered if there was soul in those steel-gray eyes that were often quite blue of color and that were strong with the briny airs of the sun-washed deep. He wondered, also, how his eyes looked to her. . . . Well, they were honest eyes, he concluded, and in them was neither smallness nor meanness. The brown sunburn of his face surprised him. He had not dreamed he was so black. He rolled up his shirt-sleeve and compared the white underside if the arm with his face. Yes, he was a white man, after all. But the arms were sunburned, too. He twisted his arm, rolled the biceps over with his other hand, and gazed underneath where he was least touched by the sun. It was very white. He laughed at his bronzed face in the glass at the thought that it was once as white as the underside of his arm. (*Martin Eden*, 35)

He frantically wonders, "What would she think if she learned that he had never washed his teeth in all the days of his life? He resolved to get a tooth-brush and form the habit. He would begin at once, to-morrow. It was not by mere achievement that he could hope to win to her. He must make a personal reform in all things, even to tooth-washing and neck-gear, though a starched collar affected him as a renunciation of freedom" (*Martin Eden*, 35–36). This scene opposes the soul-searching in Martin's eyes to what is plainly visible on his skin or teeth, as though his own power of seeing is mocked by what he sees of himself when Ruth looks at him. He wishes to control the way people perceive him, rather than be controlled by someone else's visual projections of Otherness, but he does not pause to consider the import of "a renunciation of freedom." His struggle for articulation takes on the double meaning of the word itself: to articulate is to speak, but to be *articulated* is to be dismembered, as if in sacrifice. Martin's job is to make himself into a work of art to combat the stereotypes of his identity thrust upon him by the classes above him, but a better route would have been to concentrate on making art, not being remade himself as the main

exhibit. Martin Eden's surname is appropriate for his essential innocence and the inevitability of his doom. Nevertheless, Martin "felt in his being a crying need to be clean. He must be that if he were ever to be worthy of breathing the same air with her. He washed his teeth, and scrubbed his hands with a kitchen scrub-brush till he saw a nail-brush in a drug-store window and divined its use. While purchasing it, the clerk glanced at his nails, suggested a nail-file, and so he became possessed of an additional toilet-tool" (*Martin Eden*, 47). Martin's frantic scrubbing is an attempt to become white enough for Ruth.

Laundry appears in chapter 5 as a new racial motif, symbolizing Martin's negotiations of lightening and darkening within the context of labor, turning whiter what is owned by other people even while the laborer is darkened in the process. Laundry appears in three significant sections of the book, first with Martin's sister Gertrude:

> He awoke next morning from rosy scenes of dream to a steamy atmosphere that smelled of soapsuds and dirty clothes, and that was vibrant with the jar and jangle of tormented life. As he came out of his room he heard the slosh of water, a sharp exclamation, and a resounding smack as his sister visited her irritation upon one of her numerous progeny. The squall of the child went through him like a knife. He was aware that the whole thing, the very air he breathed, was repulsive and mean. How different, he thought, from the atmosphere of beauty and repose of the house wherein Ruth dwelt. There it was all spiritual. Here it was all material, and meanly material. (*Martin Eden*, 39)

Laundry is an apt metaphor for transforming "material" into something that is spiritually clean, just as Gertrude's drudgery and "numerous progeny" are negative class markers.

In chapter 16 Martin takes the grueling job of laundryman at the Shelly Hot Springs resort, doing the work of two or three men in seemingly unending days of toil. London himself held a similar job at Belmont Academy in the spring of 1897. By week's end Martin is unable to read or even leave his bed:

> He was dead. His soul seemed dead. He was a beast, a work-beast. He saw no beauty in the sunshine sifting down through the green leaves, nor did the azure vault of the sky whisper as of old and hint of cosmic vastness and secrets trembling to disclosure. Life was intolerably dull and stupid, and its taste was bad in his mouth. A black screen was drawn across his mirror of inner vision, and fancy lay in a darkened sick-room where entered no ray of light. (*Martin Eden*, 151, 153)

His coworker, Joe, decides to quit, cursing the owner, stomping upon a shirt, and hitting the road, calling out behind him, "'Slave an' sweat! Slave an' sweat! An' when you're dead, you'll rot the same as me, an' what's it matter how you live?—eh? Tell me that—what's it matter in the long run?'" Joe invites Martin to join him, but Martin declines: "He stood, a forlorn figure, in the middle of the road, watching until Martin turned a bend and was gone from sight. 'He's a good Indian, that boy,' he muttered. 'A good Indian.' Then he plodded down the road himself" (*Martin Eden*, 159–60). Joe's comment indicates that Martin is finally lightening, or passing, by being "good" as Ruth's world expects him to be in keeping his job. He is a "good Indian" because he is a compliant savage. (How different in this respect he is from Buck, who learns at the death of Dave that there is no point in being a good slave.) But he is more of the wild "Indian" than Joe suspects; insisting on the elusive promise of a writing career, Martin finds this a growing source of conflict between him and Ruth, who wants him to settle down into a post office job instead of writing. Joe's question, "'what's it matter how you live?'" is the very question Martin is facing.

Laundry reappears in the story in the Silva kitchen scene when Ruth comes to visit Martin after he has been sick. She arrives with her brother Arthur in a carriage, "to the unqualified delight of the Silva tribe and of all the urchins on the street, and to the consternation of Maria," who, "[s]leeves rolled up from soap-flecked arms and a wet gunny-sack around her waist," is caught off-guard: "So flustered was she by two such grand young people asking for her lodger, that she forgot to invite them to sit down in the little parlor" (*Martin Eden*, 222). Despite the cleaning activity in Maria's kitchen, the impression Ruth takes away is of filthiness. Later the socialists Martin meets will be called the "real dirt" (309) by Brissenden, but the "real dirt" at the Silvas' is enough for Ruth at this moment:

> For the first time Ruth gazed upon the sordid face of poverty. Starving lovers had always seemed romantic to her,—but she had had no idea how starving lovers lived. She had never dreamed it could be like this. Ever her gaze shifted from the room to him and back again. The steamy smell of dirty clothes, which had entered with her from the kitchen, was sickening. Martin must be soaked with it, Ruth concluded, if that awful woman washed frequently. Such was the contagiousness of degradation. When she looked at Martin, she seemed to see the smirch left upon him by his surroundings. She had never seen him unshaven, and the three days' growth of beard on his face was repulsive to her. Not alone

did it give him the same dark and murky aspect of the Silva house, inside and out, but it seemed to emphasize that animal-like strength of his which she detested. (*Martin Eden*, 223–24)

Ruth steels herself and sits down to talk to him. Oddly, they talk of lepers, a satiric echo of Martin's South Seas dreams and emblem of his own "sickness" of living in a "dirty" and "dark and murky" place of "degradation" with "smells." Martin mentions that "La Grippe" is painful "'but it doesn't compare with break-bone fever.'" Ruth asks whether he has had that too:

He had had the fever in a secret colony of thirty lepers on one of the Hawaiian Islands.

"But why did you go there?" she demanded.

Such royal carelessness of body seemed criminal.

"Because I didn't know," he answered. "I never dreamed of lepers. When I deserted the schooner and landed on the beach, I headed inland for some place of hiding, ... a little mountain valley, a pocket in the midst of lava peaks. The whole place was terraced for taro-patches, fruit trees grew there, and there were eight or ten grass huts. But as soon as I saw the inhabitants I knew what I'd struck. One sight of them was enough."

"What did you do?" Ruth demanded breathlessly, listening, like any Desdemona, appalled and fascinated. (*Martin Eden*, 227–28)

Even without the reference to *Othello*, this dialogue again demonstrates the racialized distance between the worlds of Ruth and Martin, which underlies and motivates most of their ways of thinking about each other and about what it means to be a successful American, which is after all what each of them wants. He cannot convey his experiences in the South Seas to Ruth, either the horrifying and the beautiful, for she does not appreciate his realism. She has doomed herself to a voyeuristic and opportunistic relationship with Martin, who candidly describes life to her as he found it.

True to her class, Ruth decides that her approach to Martin must be identified as charity:

She wanted to help him. . . . Her pity could not be of the common sort, when the man who drew it was so much man as to shock her with maidenly fears and set her mind and pulse thrilling with strange thoughts and feelings. . . . Nor did she dream that the feeling he excited in her was love. She thought she was merely interested in him as an unusual type possessing various potential excellencies, and she even felt philanthropic about it. (*Martin Eden*, 58)

Yet when Ruth asks him about his siblings, she is not prepared for his casual reply: "'They've just knocked around over the world, lookin' out for number one. The oldest died in India. Two are in South Africa now, an' another's on a whaling voyage, an' one's travellin' with a circus—he does trapeze work. An' I guess I'm just like them. I've taken care of myself since I was eleven—that's when my mother died'" (*Martin Eden*, 62). His family evidently has a proclivity for crossing borders. Ruth is impressed by his worldliness:

> He came to her breathing of large airs and great spaces. The blaze of tropic suns was in his face, and in his swelling, resilient muscles was the primordial vigor of life. He was marred and scarred by that mysterious world of rough men and rougher deeds, the outposts of which began beyond her horizon. He was untamed, wild, and in secret ways her vanity was touched by the fact that he came so mildly to her hand. Likewise she was stirred by the common impulse to tame the wild thing. (*Martin Eden*, 69)

And yet Martin's true "worldliness," his expansive mind and spirit, will turn out to be beyond Ruth's imaginative grasp (and, in the end, his own), as when he reads her his best work and she rejects it as impolite and crude. His decision to become a writer in the first place is inspired by her location of literature within "culture," but Martin's motives are mixed. He is seeking both his vocation and a means to get to her: "tortured by the exquisite beauty of the world, and wished that Ruth were there to share it with him." He decides he will describe it to her: "The creative spirit in him flamed up at the thought and urged that he recreate this beauty for a wider audience than Ruth. And then, in splendor and glory, came the great idea. He would write. He would be one of the eyes through which the world saw, one of the ears through which it heard, one of the hearts through which it felt. He would write—everything—poetry and prose, fiction and description, and plays like Shakespeare. There was a career and the way to win to Ruth. The men of literature were the world's giants" (*Martin Eden*, 76). Though he becomes a "Napoleon of the pen," she doesn't understand what he is trying to do, and in the end neither does he.

Martin begins to move past outer appearances and discovers something new in Ruth:

> They had been eating cherries—great, luscious, black cherries with a juice of the color of dark wine. And later, as she read aloud to him from "The Princess," he chanced to notice the stain of the cherries on her lips. For the moment her divinity was shattered. She was clay, after all, mere clay, subject to the common

> law of clay as his clay was subject, or anybody's clay. Her lips were flesh like his, and cherries dyed them as cherries dyed his. And if so with her lips, then was it so with all of her. She was woman, all woman, just like any woman. It came upon him abruptly. It was a revelation that stunned him. It was as if he had seen the sun fall out of the sky, or had seen worshipped purity polluted. (*Martin Eden*, 98)

As Martin develops a more acceptable "skin" in his gradual lightening and his new clothes, the revelation of Ruth's red lips darkens her in his eyes at the same time that he is lightening in hers. Soon after this evolutionary insight into Ruth as a woman, Martin discovers Herbert Spencer, whose theory of Darwinian evolution both overwhelms him and uniquely fits his own aspirations. Spencer's works teach Martin that knowledge is the key to survival: "And here was the man Spencer, organizing all knowledge for him, reducing everything to unity, elaborating ultimate realities, and presenting to his startled gaze a universe so concrete of realization that it was like the model of a ship such as sailors make and put into glass bottles. There was no caprice, no chance. All was law. It was in obedience to law that the bird flew, and it was in obedience to the same law that fermenting slime had writhed and squirmed and put out legs and wings and become a bird" (*Martin Eden*, 108). This passage is indicative both of Martin's highest ideals and dreams and also of his unacknowledged limitations. The idea that through his writing he could attain a woman as well as mastery of the entire world is nothing less than a deluded young man's fondest dream. But the "concrete" in his model of the universe is mocked in the "glass bottles" that hem in and constrict model ships: Martin is a "model" on his way with Ruth to becoming a parlor display, potentially adding to the social currency of the Morses' with his eventual fame. The image of the "slime," and alternatively of the "bird" whose wings represent freedom and the attainment of a soul, further illustrates Martin's complicated position.

It is important to note that though Martin reads an extensive list of philosophers, scientists, economists, and others before Spencer, after he encounters Spencer he reads virtually no one else:[22]

> Martin had ascended from pitch to pitch of intellectual living, and here he was at a higher pitch than ever. All the hidden things were laying their secrets bare. He was drunken with comprehension. At night, asleep, he lived with the gods in colossal nightmare; and awake, in the day, he went around like a somnambulist, with absent stare, gazing upon the world he had just discovered. At table he

> failed to hear the conversation about petty and ignoble things, his eager mind seeking out and following cause and effect in everything before him. In the meat on the platter he saw the shining sun and traced its energy back through all its transformations to its source a hundred million miles away, or traced its energy ahead to the moving muscles in his arms that enabled him to cut the meat, and to the brain wherewith he willed the muscles to move to cut the meat, until, with inward gaze, he saw the same sun shining in his brain. (*Martin Eden*, 108)

Though Martin believes Spencer has opened his eyes to the "great black mass of ignorance" (*Martin Eden*, 110) that makes up the majority of human beings, like Wolf Larsen, Martin comes to regret this insight into the abyss. In the midst of reading Spencer he recalls his childhood fight with a rival named Cheese-Face. Martin muses, "'And so you arise from the mud, Martin Eden,' he said solemnly. 'And you cleanse your eyes in a great brightness, and thrust your shoulders among the stars, doing what all life has done, letting the "ape and tiger die" and wresting highest heritage from all powers that be'" (138). Though Martin beats Cheese-Face, that name uncomfortably conjures up the possibility that Martin and his kind can be not only beaten but eaten, just like Martin's nose; it also vaguely suggests leprosy in the reference to losing a nose. Martin's arising from the mud image hints at a kind of healing from a diseased past, but it foregrounds the reality of the past. Spencer's social evolution and "survival of the fittest" give Martin intellectual justification for his quest for perfection in attaining Ruth, but by this point Martin's creator had rejected Spencer's certainties. Spencer is also a rather ironic choice of mentor for a young man who is not quite white enough.

In chapter 19, Mrs. Morse tries to reason with Ruth. Though Ruth admits Martin is not their "'kind,'" and agrees with her mother that he "has not lived a clean life," Ruth defends Martin:

> "It has not been his fault, but he has played much with—"
>
> "With pitch?"
>
> "Yes, with pitch. And he frightens me. Sometimes I am positively in terror of him, when he talks in that free and easy way of the things he has done—as if they did not matter. They do matter, don't they?" (*Martin Eden*, 164)

Ruth's mother bides her time, and Ruth goes on. First she claims he is her "protégé," then likens him to having a pet bulldog. Then, "'He is not all that a man should not be—a man I would want for my—'her voice sank very low—

'husband. Then he is too strong'" (*Martin Eden*, 165). When Ruth's mother speaks, she pulls out what she knows to be her most powerful weapon—the specter of race: "'there is one thing you must always carry in mind'—'Yes, mother.' Mrs. Morse's voice was low and sweet as she said, 'And that is the children. . . . Their heritage must be clean, and he is, I am afraid, not clean. Your father has told me of sailors' lives and—and you understand'" (166–67). Perhaps doubting Ruth's ability to reject Martin physically, Mrs. Morse believes that the issue of race is the one that could end the romance. From sex with nonwhite women, Martin has presumably been infected with disease. The reference to the children also speaks of miscegenation, or "low breeding," as Mrs. Morse would say, in any case contamination of the Morse blood. The word "pitch" ironically inverts its earlier usage in chapter 13, when Martin is said to ascend "from pitch to pitch of intellectual living, and here he was at a higher pitch than ever" (108). While the two women react to Martin's "pitch" as the mark of toil, of poverty, of racial darkening, of sexual promiscuity, and disease, Martin soars to new "pitches" of understanding.

But Ruth doesn't wait long to overcome her fears, and soon the couple declare their love: "tearing herself half out of his embrace, suddenly and exultantly she reached up and placed both hands upon Martin Eden's sunburnt neck. So exquisite was the pang of love and desire fulfilled that she uttered a low moan, relaxed her hands, and lay half-swooning in his arms" (*Martin Eden*, 179). Her obsession with his darkened, phallic neck invokes her class-based appropriation of him, her newly realized romantic power over his masculinity. Martin again privately engages in some masculine and evolutionary insight:

> As he held Ruth in his arms and soothed her, he took great consolation in the thought that the Colonel's lady and Judy O'Grady were pretty much alike under their skins. It brought Ruth closer to him, made her possible. Her dear flesh was as anybody's flesh, as his flesh. There was no bar to their marriage. Class difference was the only difference, and class was extrinsic. It could be shaken off. A slave, he had read, had risen to the Roman purple. That being so, then he could rise to Ruth. Under her purity, and saintliness, and culture, and ethereal beauty of soul, she was, in things fundamentally human, just like Lizzie Connolly and all Lizzie Connollys. All that was possible of them was possible of her. (*Martin Eden*, 182)

Martin is feeling acquisitive, and he overpowers his fears of her class by casting her alongside the other women he has known "under their skins," that is,

sexually. Like all women, she can be handled. If it were not for the ensuing complications of class identity, this meeting of minds and bodies might have worked, as it does with other seemingly mismatched couples such as Elam Harnish and Dede Mason of *Burning Daylight* (1910).

The eventual rupture between Martin and Ruth indirectly occurs because of Martin's upwardly mobile choice of a new home. With his laundry job he is able to afford a rented room with a "Portuguese landlady, Maria Silva, a virago and a widow, hard working and harsher tempered, rearing her large brood of children somehow. . . . From detesting her and her foul tongue at first, Martin grew to admire her as he observed the brave fight she made" (*Martin Eden*, 192). His relocation gives Martin new perspectives. He challenges Ruth for the first time, "'You worship at the shrine of the established,' he told her once, in a discussion they had over Praps and Vanderwater. 'I grant that as authorities to quote they are most excellent—the two foremost literary critics in the United States. Every school teacher in the land looks up to Vanderwater as the Dean of American criticism. Yet I read his stuff, and it seems to me the perfection of the felicitous expression of the inane. Why, he is no more than a ponderous bromide.'" Ruth responds, "'I think I am nearer the truth,'" she replied, "'when I stand by the established, than you are, raging around like an iconoclastic South Sea Islander'" (203). Similarly, they miscommunicate when he excitedly reads his latest work to her:

> She listened closely while he read, and though he from time to time had seen only disapprobation in her face, at the close he asked:
>
> "But that character, that Wiki-Wiki, why do you make him talk so roughly? Surely it will offend your readers, and surely that is why the editors are justified in refusing your work."
>
> "Because the real Wiki-Wiki would have talked that way."
>
> "But it is not good taste."
>
> "It is life," he replied bluntly. "It is real. It is true. And I must write life as I see it." (*Martin Eden*, 297–98)

Wiki-wiki, a word of action and urgency, in Hawaiian means "quick." If Martin could continue to speak "bluntly," as he does here, he would probably be able to convince Ruth of his position, but instead race once again separates him in the form of *Wiki-wiki*.

Maria's estimation of Martin also rises and falls as she realizes he is not just in the working class like her; he has better prospects, and she prefers to think

of him as a famous author with well-to-do friends. Indeed, one day when he helps her with her laundry she is upset to have to see him as merely her equal. One evening they share their thoughts:

> [T]hey were lonely in their misery, and though the misery was tacitly ignored, it was the bond that drew them together. Maria was amazed to learn that he had been in the Azores, where she had lived until she was eleven. She was doubly amazed that he had been in the Hawaiian Islands, whither she had migrated from the Azores with her people. But her amazement passed all bounds when he told her he had been on Maui, the particular island whereon she had attained womanhood and married. . . .
>
> And so they reminisced and drowned their hunger in the raw, sour wine. To Martin the future did not seem so dim. Success trembled just before him. He was on the verge of clasping it. Then he studied the deep-lined face of the toil-worn woman before him, remembered her soups and loaves of new baking, and felt spring up in him the warmest gratitude and philanthropy.
>
> "Maria," he exclaimed suddenly. "What would you like to have?" (*Martin Eden*, 210–11)

Once he is successful, Martin makes Maria's dreams come true with her own farm and dairy, among other things, but the question he asks her should have been directed to himself. He believes he knows what he wants, but unlike Maria he is wrong. Maria, like Lizzie Connolly, is a working-class woman less conflicted about life than the intellectual passer Martin. Like Virginia Prentiss in London's childhood, she is a hard-working and nurturing woman. Martin and Maria share a bond because of their class and their travels in the South Seas. But Martin thinks he can whiten both of them with his success, fittingly enough with a dairy farm for Maria.

In chapter 26 London has Maria's nine-year-old daughter Teresa open Martin's mail and read it to him when he is sick. He has given up entirely on literary success, his feverish dreams fatally haunted by rejection slips and bills. Teresa reads him the startling news that a magazine called the *White Mouse* is offering him forty dollars for his story "The Whirlpool" (*Martin Eden*, 220).[23] But when Ruth observes Martin in the company of the Silva family, whom he has taken out for candy to celebrate his good news, this is not good news:

> It was with this extraordinary procession trooping at his and Maria's heels into a confectioner's in quest of the biggest candy-cane ever made, that he encountered

> Ruth and her mother. Mrs. Morse was shocked. Even Ruth was hurt, for she had some regard for appearances, and her lover, cheek by jowl with Maria, at the head of that army of Portuguese ragamuffins, was not a pretty sight. But it was not that which hurt so much as what she took to be his lack of pride and self-respect. Further, and keenest of all, she read into the incident the impossibility of his living down his working-class origin. There was stigma enough in the fact of it, but shamelessly to flaunt it in the face of the world—her world—was going too far. Though her engagement to Martin had been kept secret, their long intimacy had not been unproductive of gossip; and in the shop, glancing covertly at her lover and his following, had been several of her acquaintances. She lacked the easy largeness of Martin and could not rise superior to her environment. (*Martin Eden*, 308)

This is a classic scene from narratives of passing, in which the presumably "passed" individual is observed by the whites as mingling with nonwhites, reverting, as it were, to a primitive state.

Snubbed by Ruth and done with the writing game, Martin looks for other interests. Brissenden, based on London's poet-friend George Sterling, fascinates Martin. Martin notes his friend's odd physiognomy as well as his radical ideas:

> Brissenden's face and long, slender hands were browned by the sun—excessively browned, Martin thought. This sunburn bothered Martin. It was patent that Brissenden was no outdoor man. Then how had he been ravaged by the sun? Something morbid and significant attached to that sunburn. . . .
>
> "Oh, I'm a lunger [tubercular]," Brissenden announced, offhand, a little later, having already stated that he came from Arizona. "I've been down there a couple of years living on the climate." (*Martin Eden*, 280–81)

Just as Ruth is alternately aroused and repelled by Martin's "bronze" neck, Martin is both attracted and repelled by Brissenden's color. Brissenden is a model of the tragic poet, such as Keats, whose sensitive body and soul could not survive the vagaries of the world, but Brissenden's socialism is less revolutionary than simply snobbish disdain for the intellect of the bourgeoisie. Brissenden elects not to pass into any group, and to die alone as he wishes, above the fray.

In chapter 38 Brissenden takes Martin to an Oakland Socialists' meeting to meet the people Brissenden calls "'the real dirt'" (*Martin Eden*, 309). Though

Martin enjoys debating about Haeckel and Spencer, he ends up lecturing the socialists on Nietzsche. At a subsequent socialist meeting Martin is mistaken for a socialist by a local reporter; he is subsequently written up in the papers as their leader, which causes Ruth to decide to break permanently with Martin. At that meeting, Martin calls the socialists "slaves" and "inefficients":

> "The old law of development still holds. In the struggle for existence, as I have shown, the strong and the progeny of the strong tend to survive, while the weak and the progeny of the weak are crushed and tend to perish. . . . That is development. But you slaves . . . dream of a society where the law of development will be annulled, . . . where every inefficient will have as much as he wants to eat as many times a day as he desires, and where all will marry and have progeny. . . . Your society of slaves—of, by, and for, slaves—must inevitably weaken and go to pieces as the life which composes it weakens and goes to pieces." (*Martin Eden*, 328–29)

Martin is talking about the same unmentionable subject he and Professor Caldwell discussed earlier in hushed tones under the rubric of "biology." Martin is saying that socialism will not work because it will promote the lesser types of individuals to multiply. The cub reporter composing his sensationalistic story gets everything backwards, another transvaluation:

> [H]e did not know what all the talk. It was not necessary. Words like *revolution* gave him his cue. Like a paleontologist, able to reconstruct an entire skeleton from one fossil bone, he was able to reconstruct a whole speech from the one word *revolution*. He did it that night, and he did it well; and since Martin had made the biggest stir, he put it all into his mouth and made him the arch-anarch of the show, transforming his reactionary individualism into the most lurid, red-shirt socialist utterance. (*Martin Eden*, 331)

This time Martin is Othered because of his voice, the single attribute that he believes to be genuine and true, as London believed his artistic voice to be. One wonders how much of a self-parody London intended here, for Martin's predicament as the speaker in this scene enacts London's own struggle for speech as author of the novel. Each man's message is misunderstood. Martin appears to be a "radical," which in the public mind is a largely interchangeable value with "socialist," and so he fits their formula. The young reporter naively visits Martin and Brissenden the next day for a follow-up story, presumably ignorant of the great distortion he has made out of Martin, of having created

a false identity and profiting from it. Martin and Brissenden tease him and finally beat him up: "In the next morning's paper Martin learned a great deal more about himself that was new to him. 'We are the sworn enemies of society,' he found himself quoted as saying. . . . His face was described as bilaterally asymmetrical, and various other signs of degeneration were described" (335). Bernard Higginbotham calls Martin "the black sheep of the family" (336). Martin's own racism in his social Darwinistic speech is powerfully redirected against him.

One wonders why Martin does not see the sense in socialism, since all around him is evidence of the cruelties of a capitalist society. His faith in individualism is shaken when his sister confronts him in the street and asks him not to visit their home again.

> [Gertrude] went away weeping audibly, and he felt a pang of sorrow shoot through him at sight of her heavy body and uncouth gait. As he watched her go, the Nietzschean edifice seemed to shake and totter. The slave-class in the abstract was all very well, but it was not wholly satisfactory when it was brought home to his own family. . . . A fine Nietzsche-man he was, to allow his intellectual concepts to be shaken by the first sentiment or emotion that strayed along—ay, to be shaken by the slave-morality itself, for that was what his pity for his sister really was. The true noble men were above pity and compassion. (*Martin Eden*, 339)

Martin has intellectually recognized a paradox, but the full meaning of his insight has not yet reached him.

THE WHITE LINE

Soon the full meaning does bear down on Martin. He begins to doubt his vision of passing:

> How long he sat there he did not know, until, suddenly, across his sightless vision he saw form a long horizontal line of white. It was curious. But as he watched it grow in definiteness he saw that it was a coral reef smoking in the white Pacific surges. Next, in the line of breakers he made out a small canoe, an outrigger canoe. In the stern he saw a young bronzed god in scarlet hip-cloth dipping a flashing paddle. He recognized him. He was Moti, the youngest son of Tati, the chief, and this was Tahiti. . . . Then he saw himself, sitting forward in the canoe as he had often sat in the past, dipping a paddle that waited Moti's word to dig

> in like mad when the turquoise wall of the great breaker rose behind them. . . . [There] was a rush and rumble and long-echoing roar, and the canoe floated on the placid water of the lagoon. Moti laughed and shook the salt water from his eyes, and together they paddled. (*Martin Eden*, 346–47)

This vision is Martin's recalled fantasy of what racial passing the other way might be like—that is, attempting to become a successful Nature Man among the natives of the South Seas. One notes the "white line," which symbolizes the barrier to Ruth's class Martin now understands and attempts to transvalue. Martin calls up new companions who are racially Other: the bronzed Moti and his father Tati. Martin is still looking to move up in terms of class, to live with the ruling class, but he now imagines a differently raced ruling class, more suitable to David Grief: "The visions of Tahiti—clean, sweet Tahiti—were coming to him more frequently. And there were the low Paumotus, and the high Marquesas. The South Seas were calling, and he knew that sooner or later he would answer the call" (*Martin Eden*, 351). At the same time, having achieved success as a writer, he becomes increasingly lonely and isolated:

> The cessation from writing and studying, the death of Brissenden, and the estrangement from Ruth had made a big hole in his life; and his life refused to be pinned down to good living in cafes and the smoking of Egyptian cigarettes. . . . He knew a valley and a bay in the Marquesas that he could buy for a thousand Chili dollars. . . . He would buy a schooner—one of those yacht-like, coppered crafts that sailed like witches—and go trading copra and pearling among the islands. . . . He would build a patriarchal grass house like Tati's, and have it and the valley and the schooner filled with dark-skinned servitors. He would entertain there the factor of Taiohae, captains of wandering traders, and all the best of the South Pacific riffraff. He would keep open house and entertain like a prince. And he would forget the books he had opened and the world that had proved an illusion. (*Martin Eden*, 355)

But Martin is already too sick to be able to make this dream come true. He seems tied enough to the bourgeois view of things to want to flee the white world of the Morses in order not just to live in the Marquesas but to live there as royalty, his friends merely "bronze," while "dark-skinned servitors" do their bidding. He is not so much identifying with the nonwhite but as another white patriarch like Mr. Morse; he has been poisoned by bourgeois whiteness and has lost his "dark" self, the source of his creativity and storytelling ability.

Ruth's final visit to Martin is painful for both of them. Despite her willingness now to pass over class lines as well as "racial" ones and even just be his mistress, the narrator reinforces her class and race status as finally separate from Martin's, who is "too confused to speak. In his own mind his affair with Ruth was closed and sealed. He felt much in the same way that he would have felt had the Shelly Hot Springs Laundry suddenly invaded the Hotel Metropole with a whole week's washing ready for him to pitch into" (*Martin Eden*, 389). Her whiteness, coldness, "piteously" extended arms make her seem dead to him. To Ruth's dismay, he finds his words:

> "Why didn't you dare it before?" he asked harshly. "When I hadn't a job? When I was starving? When I was just as I am now, as a man, as an artist, the same Martin Eden? . . . You see I have not changed, though my sudden apparent appreciation in value compels me constantly to reassure myself on that point. . . . I am personally of the same value that I was when nobody wanted me. . . . It is for the recognition I have received. That recognition is not I. It resides in the minds of others. Then again for the money I have earned and am earning. But that money is not I. . . . And is it for that, for the recognition and the money, that you now want me?" (*Martin Eden*, 389)

She objects, but he cuts her off: "'You would have destroyed my writing and my career. Realism is imperative to my nature, and the bourgeois spirit hates realism. The bourgeoisie is cowardly. It is afraid of life. . . . You would have formalized me. You would have compressed me into a two-by-four pigeonhole of life, where all life's values are unreal, and false, and vulgar'" (389). The irony, of course, is that Martin has already ended his precious career.

Sailing aboard the *Mariposa* for the South Seas, at the end his long-sought whiteness blinds him to any sense of hope or of a future:

> Life was to him like strong, white light that hurts the tired eyes of a sick person. During every conscious moment life blazed in a raw glare around him and upon him. It hurt. It hurt intolerably. It was the first time in his life that Martin had travelled first class. On ships at sea he had always been in the forecastle, the steerage, or in the black depths of the coal-hold, passing coal. In those days, climbing up the iron ladders out the pit of stifling heat, he had often caught glimpses of the passengers, in cool white, doing nothing but enjoy themselves, under awnings spread to keep the sun and wind away from them, with subservient stewards taking care of their every want and whim, and it had seemed to him

> that the realm in which they moved and had their being was nothing else than paradise. Well, here he was, the great man on board, in the midmost centre of it, sitting at the captain's right hand, and yet vainly harking back to forecastle and stoke-hole in quest of the Paradise he had lost. He had found no new one, and now he could not find the old one. (*Martin Eden*, 407)

Finally squeezing through his porthole into the sea, Martin yields control over his destiny:

> His wilful hands and feet began to beat and churn about, spasmodically and feebly. But he had fooled them and the will to live that made them beat and churn. He was too deep down. They could never bring him to the surface. He seemed floating languidly in a sea of dreamy vision. Colors and radiances surrounded him and bathed him and pervaded him. What was that? It seemed a lighthouse; but it was inside his brain—a flashing, bright white light. It flashed swifter and swifter. There was a long rumble of sound, and it seemed to him that he was falling down a vast and interminable stairway. And somewhere at the bottom he fell into darkness. That much he knew. He had fallen into darkness. And at the instant he knew, he ceased to know. (*Martin Eden*, 411)

Like the unfortunate Ah Cho in "The Chinago" or Bassett in "The Red One," the last thing Martin receives is knowledge. Charles N. Watson Jr. notes that "On February 24, 1908, Charmian recorded in her diary that London had finished the novel with Martin's suicide but that he was not depressed. No wonder he was not. Though in his life he continued to suffer pains beyond cure, in his art he knew he had done well."[24] Martin, at last become a whitened commodity, sinks in the dark water a "white statue," the white bonita striking at him and slowly dismembering and consuming his body (*Martin Eden*, 408–11). There are many ironies in the last chapters; the attaining of everything Martin has desired followed by his rejection of it all, the competing "meanings" of his suicide that will circulate after his death, and most of all the ironic imagery of whiteness and darkness. The concluding passage opposes once again the beckoning white light of a lighthouse, but Martin is kicked down to the "darkness" of the basement. What is ultimately lost for Martin is his fondest ability, the ability to "know," to learn, to express, silenced by the dark waters of the sea.

SEVEN

"Make Westing" for the Sonoma Dream

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On christmas eve 1911, the Londons boarded a Western Pacific train in Oakland for New York City. They arrived January 2, 1912, and London planned meetings with a new publisher, Century. His spat with George Brett at Macmillan, his long-time publisher, would later be resolved, but this sudden change was one warning sign amid many that London's state of mind and behavior were unstable. In New York he drank heavily and was reportedly out with chorus girls, leaving Charmian to fret at night in their rooms on Morningside Drive:

> Almost any passage in our companionship I contemplate with more pleasure than that 1912 Winter in "Gotham." . . . The City reached into him and plucked to light the least admirable of his qualities. Out of the wholesome blisses of his Western life, he plunged into a condition that negated his accustomed personality. . . . Coincident with our arrival, he warned that he was going to invite one last, thorough-going bout with alcohol, and that when he should sail on the Cape Horn voyage, it was to be "Goodbye, forever to John Barleycorn." . . . [U]pon him, the effect of alcoholic stimulus was to render preternaturally active an already superactive mind. Keen, hair-splitting in controversy, reckless of mind and body, sweeping all before him, passionately intolerant of man and woman who challenged his way—all this and more was he in his "white logic" extreme. This unnatural state, combined with the depression New York invariably put upon him, was dangerous.[1]

Charmian's linking of London's health with his home in the "West," seeing his weakness as intolerance of others, as well as feeling that "the City" was a place of danger and disease, echoes London's idea after the *Snark* voyage that his good health and frame of mind depended on the California climate. In 1905 he realized he would have to leave urban life behind, as well as his friends, and

move to Sonoma if he were to be with Charmian. Suffering from depression, he saw Charmian's healthy lifestyle and the country as what he needed to recover and be able to produce his best. This was not an easy decision for someone who hated the country life, as demonstrated by the death of the character who tries it in London's story "Planchette" (1905). But Charmian was living the life London needed: she detested smoking and drinking, kept a healthy diet, and adored regular exercise of all kinds—riding, hiking, sailing, and swimming. As London continued to abuse his health, it fell upon her to try to make him stop. Thus in 1912, to get away from the distractions of letters and telegrams, parties and alcohol, the press, lawyers, and publishers, the couple signed on as crew aboard a ship that was to sail from Baltimore to Seattle around Cape Horn. Once they were underway, Charmian threw London's cigarettes overboard, and after bitter complaints, he joined her in boxing, reading, climbing the yard-arms, and, finally, relaxing. His old productivity returned.

The *Dirigo* was a three-thousand-ton, four-masted Maine-built bark that had been launched seventeen years earlier as one of the first steel windjammers. London had signed on himself as third mate, Charmian as stewardess, and their valet Yoshimatsu Nakata as assistant steward. On the day before they were to sail from Baltimore, after an all-night bender, London showed up at the hotel rooms with his head shaved. Charmian was furious. What, she wondered, would people think? According to her, London merely "tittered" at her reaction. He said, "'Oh, now, don't feel badly, Mate Woman. . . . It is such a good rest for my head—I often did it in the old days, at sea and around.'"[2] His bow to the hygiene of the seas (sailors shaved their heads to keep away lice and other pests) and the gesture of self-abnegation were lost on her: "It was the last straw in a hard winter, to mix a metaphor. I wept uncontrollably for nearly three hours." She grabbed a pair of scissors and sheared off eight inches of her own hair in retaliation. She records that she "did not look directly at Jack again until there was at least half an inch of hair on his head."[3] In a photograph taken that afternoon at a ceremony honoring Edgar Allan Poe's grave, London wears a sheepish expression and a hat that, absent his hair, now rests on his ears almost down to his eyes. The only ray of light on this day was a new puppy they adopted, Possum, a fox terrier.[4] On March 1, after stopping to buy London a stocking cap, they caught up with the *Dirigo* a few miles out in Chesapeake Bay.

The *Dirigo* arrived in Seattle five months later on July 26. London enjoyed mingling with the crew and gathering ideas for *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore,

also making notes for *John Barleycorn* and finishing *The Valley of the Moon* and other shorter works. Charmian typed his work and made notes for him on Saxon's pregnancy in *The Valley of the Moon*; Nakata was proud that he too was now typing for London. They enjoyed the voyage but were ill early on—their memories of the diseases on the *Snark* trip made them initially overreact to what proved to be a bed bug infestation. The *Dirigo* experienced several gales and spent two weeks trying to round Cape Horn, repeatedly getting close but then being blown backward in the stormy seas. On May 20, having just reached the 70-degree mark that meant they had achieved the momentous Cape Horn hurdle and were now heading into their future, the Londons had a long serious discussion about alcohol, as recorded in Charmian's diary. But she did not like what she heard. Despite his promise in New York to abandon "John Barleycorn," London now denied he was an alcoholic and told her that when they got to land he would resume drinking "responsibly." Charmian occupied herself by nursing the captain, Omar Chapman, dying from stomach cancer. Chapman died just after they made Seattle.

Though the *Dirigo* trip was nothing like the nightmare voyage London would imagine for the *Elsinore*, it was a turning point personally, and not for the better. Their decision aboard the *Dirigo* to try for another child—which Charmian had thought was contingent on London's giving up alcohol—resulted in a pregnancy, but soon after their return to the ranch Charmian miscarried while London was at the annual Hi-Jinks festival at the Bohemian Grove. During her long recuperation she became depressed. Soon their marriage would be in serious trouble, with Charmian seemingly considering leaving London for Allan Dunn, an artist who visited the ranch in 1913. This situation was magnified by other losses in 1913 as London completed *The Valley of the Moon* and *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore. As Kingman points out,

> Just about everything that could go wrong went wrong in 1913. Irving Shepard [London's nephew], Eliza's son, was nearly electrocuted while climbing a tree during school recess and was in bed recuperating in the Londons' cottage for several months. Jack was stricken with appendicitis. One of his most valuable mares was mistakenly killed by a hunter. Captain Shepard went berserk and tried to kill his estranged wife, Eliza, and then had Jack arrested for stopping him too energetically. In addition, a false spring and late frost ruined the fruit crop, a plague of locusts attacked the young eucalyptus trees, the cornfield was scorched by unusually hot winds, the Balboa Amusement Company brought suit

> to wrest all of Jack's copyrights away from him for their motion picture company, and the crowning blow came in August when his beautiful Wolf House was destroyed by fire.[5]

London's temper flared during this period, as evidenced in some of his letters, which increasingly display an ugly interest in demeaning those who disagree with him, even Charmian and Eliza (*Letters*, 1101), not to mention the cold tone he adopts toward his eldest daughter, Joan, who was now old enough to challenge him on his responsibilities to her mother. The old hospitable tone he had often used to correspondents, inviting even those he had arguments with to visit ("Why not run on up to the ranch? The latch-string is always out") changed.[6] If *John Barleycorn* has a basis in London's life, then it was at this time London began drinking in the morning in order to write, something that he had never done before and that no one can do for long, if self-fulfillment is also a goal.

The Mutiny of the Elsinore and *The Valley of the Moon* display racial and identity conflicts that seemed settled in the Hawaiian and South Seas fiction and critiqued in *Martin Eden*, but they change once again, now from new depths of self-doubt. *The Valley of the Moon* has been criticized for the racism of its protagonists, Saxon and Billy Roberts (one notes her name, to begin with), but *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore makes *The Valley of the Moon* look like a model of political correctness. As we have seen, London's conflicting artistic orientation to race is the most telling indicator as to the quality of his work. In Hawai'i's diverse environment he was at home, as he would once again be in visits during 1915–16, when he renewed his fictional attacks on racism and valorizing of nonwhite heroes. But now he saw things through jaundiced eyes. He felt displaced by circumstances: he was often ill, his drinking was out of control, he was facing many legal and contractual conflicts, the ranch was a constant drain, and he was worried that he might be losing his gift and his market. And then there was the loss of Wolf House, his writer's house of pride and most physical evidence of his idea of home. These negative influences on his author-identity would only intensify and continue as toxic influences on him, as the next chapter's analysis of his 1914 Mexican Revolution correspondence reveals.

In Charmian's unpublished *Diary of* Dirigo *Voyage around Cape Horn*, she provides insights into the *Dirigo* trip but does not record any particular racial observations either of her own or of London's about the crew. London made

dozens of photographs aboard the *Dirigo*, capturing dramatic scenes of gigantic seas and the rounding of Cape Horn, but also a series of sensitive portraits of various crewmen. There is no violence, no grumbling crew, no class wars, no men overboard, no "mongrels," "degenerates," or "inefficients," as the protagonist of *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore calls its crew, and no dead bodies except that of a seagull and some chickens Possum attacked. We must look to London's own state of mind for the sources of racialist stereotypes in *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore rather than to any documented experience he had on the *Dirigo*.

Charmian writes how for the two of them "our machinery of life, shot with love, resumes" on the *Dirigo*. She nostalgically compares the *Dirigo* to the *Snark* voyage, grateful that "We move in beauty" under southern sunsets and constellations. She records their reading to each other Strindberg, Henry James, and Thomas Dixon's *Comrades*, the last of which they found "foolish."[7] She records her hope that *The Valley of the Moon* "will bind together all readers of all nations, for its health, its lovingness and a charm all its own."[8] She relates their feelings over the loss of Joy in 1910 and of their again trying to have a child. One of her most characteristic passages is of the two of them on deck late at night:

> I went on the main deck later and found it bright moonlight. So I had to rout my man. Together we trudged to the fore, to look back upon the swaying sprays of tight white pearls gleaming in the dazzling radiance. One simply is cowed by the impossibility of wording what one sees and feels in the bows of a wind-propelled vessel. The first means made by man, by man the sailor—himself the original adventurer in the civilizing of other peoples. I looked at Jack London, there beside me. His short-Greek face was upturned, and his deep-sea eyes were wide upon the unspeakable glory from deck to maintruck, of those snowy flowering petals of pearl. Presently he came back and looked at me. Jack said: "Is it Possible, Mate Woman, that we are seeing this together, and have been together on this full-rigged ship, have made our Westing around Cape Horn—our dream since childhood?"[9]

Of course Charmian, in characterizing voyaging as "civilizing" others—and in seeing her husband's face as "Greek"—tells us more about attitudes of readers back home than about London's writings. Nearing California, they planned their new baby and their "growing Wolf House, and many dear things we want to do on our 'Beauty Ranch.'"[10]

The Valley of the Moon is a novel of the imagined home Charmian helped

her husband envision. Led by the wife, Saxon, the Robertses flee Oakland's violence and labor strife and wander over California in a counterclockwise route from the Central Valley to Oregon and finally to Sonoma, until they find their "valley of the moon," where they plan to build their farm. In the earlier *Burning Daylight*, Bonanza King Elam Harnish gives up his riches for a retreat to the countryside with Dede Mason. Later in *The Little Lady of the Big House*, however, the California dream is exploded by sexual frustration, adultery, and suicide. As Stoddard Martin observes, though its Dick Forrest is more intelligent than Tom Buchanan in *The Great Gatsby*, his "regurgitations" about race similarly are "one factor contributing to his wife's alienation": "'I suppose Dick is right,' Paula Forrest tells Evan Graham one night after one of Dick's dinner-table harangues, 'but I confess . . . I don't know what bearing sporting dominants and race-paces have on my life.'"[11] In London's oeuvre "the divorce of the heroine from the romantic doctrine of Anglo-Saxon adventurism is certainly a signal development."[12]

Throughout his life to find a new home London characteristically headed west. Two wests now called him: one was represented by California and its healing properties, but a site now compromised by several factors; the other west was represented most clearly by the healing nature of Hawai'i. In the Sonoma west, London was a king, and there he imagined he could again rebuild Wolf House and restore his "rightful" place in society, fulfilling the anxious quest for self as a "psychology of want." In the Hawai'i west he could be a different, cosmopolitan self, comfortable with diverse peoples, a man who could admire in anyone a shared sense of humanity.[13]

Race in *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore and *The Valley of the Moon*, each with its own construct of racial competition and destiny, could not appear to be more different to the casual reader. Though Billy Roberts spouts pieties about "real" Americans when he and Saxon encounter groups of immigrant farmers, *The Valley of the Moon* in general advances an idealistic sense of the future through rising in class, as in *Martin Eden*, but also in returning to nature, as in *Burning Daylight*. *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore, despite an improbable romance, offers no hope for a future, portraying instead the naturalistically determined aftermath of protagonist's John Pathurst's personal disillusionment as an author and his attempt to overcome this through the workings of his white supremacist mind. Whereas Saxon and Billy Roberts live out an antiurban, back-to-the-land story of diasporic rediscovery of identity—if not without a sense of competition with other immigrant groups—a future for

John Pathurst and Margaret West does not seem possible given Pathurst's negativity and obsessions. But to make too sharp a distinction between these books is to miss the undercurrents of irony in both of them, for they both contain counterdiscourses to complicate and subvert their surface themes. As with *A Daughter of the Snows* and *Adventure*, one can read these novels "straight," but doing so suppresses their considerable ironies. In *The Valley of the Moon* Billy's discourse is full of racist anxiety, but this is balanced by Saxon's gendered sense of cultural relativity. In *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore Pathurst's gender only exacerbates his and everyone else's racism with his sputtering and posturing. Lawrence Berkove suggests that Pathurst is not a novelistic hero: his "naiveté and blatant and simplistic racism" restrict him to a viewpoint from which he cannot "satisfactorily account for either events or personalities."[14] Mulligan, a perceptive crewman, charges that the mutineers "'are what you an' your fathers have made 'em. An' who in hell are you and your fathers? Robbers of the toil of men.'"[15] If it cannot be said that either book is ironic through and through, each from time to time makes fun of itself, especially in the racial attitudes of white male figures sure of themselves and their identities.[16]

In *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore, Pathurst seems as degenerated and as much in need of a healing home as London was when leaving New York and Baltimore. Though Pathurst loves Margaret West and wins her, as a husband he is in every respect unworthy of her, and his victory can only be explained by the rules of concluding romantic adventure novels. Similarly, in *The Valley of the Moon*, the journey motif and the attempt to find a home to reclaim the healing powers of nature are undercut by Billy's closed-minded racial prejudices and general lack of vision—he would never have made the break from Oakland without Saxon to guide and inspire him, and he will never know his multiracial neighbors in Sonoma or learn their farming techniques unless she does. His eyes are not on them, on the human environment or culture, nor even on her. In the end his attention is on his planned clay-mine on Sonoma Mountain.

THE SELF AT HOME IN *THE VALLEY OF THE MOON*

Charles L. Crow notes that despite California's "urgency" as a site for "the good life" of western migration, Joan Didion's characterization of California as the "end of the road" holds true: as she said, "Things had better work out here," because here is "where we run out of continent."[17] Crow finds California literature mainly one of disillusionment: "things did not work out here, after

all." Yet there is a set of works involving the San Francisco Bay area where "a perfect home place" is realized after a radical "transformation of the self" on the part of the protagonist. *The Valley of the Moon* is the "first major narrative in this visionary tradition."[18] Yet for Crow it is "a flawed, hybrid work," beginning in the naturalist mode of Émile Zola or Frank Norris but turning halfway through into romance. For Billy and Saxon, historical forces may have "destroyed the promise of California," but in breaking free by leaving the mode of naturalism for a romantic dream, they "begin their journey of ascent, and are granted at last a vision of reconciliation and wholeness, of a perfect California home."[19] The first volume of *The Valley of the Moon* Crow rightly compares to Norris's *McTeague* and Zola's *L'Assomoir*, with a naturalistic agenda "to refute illusions with the hard truths of nature and economics. . . . The illusions that are destroyed have . . . to do with core American beliefs: that virtue and hard work are invariably rewarded, that honest working men can earn enough to support a modest but healthy home." The failure of this dream, the chaos in their marriage and the loss of their home and child, are "all the more poignant because of its location in the lovely physical setting of California. After so many centuries, the great Anglo-Saxon folk migration . . . has fetched up against the barrier of the Pacific, its goal unachieved." With its violent strikes, Oakland, where Billy is jailed and has his arms broken, "has become just another brutal industrial town in which dreams are ruined, like those in the East, like those in Europe, from which generations of migrants fled." Volume 1 appropriately ends with the image of a linnet in a cage, an echo of *McTeague*.[20] But toward the end of volume 2 and throughout volume 3, this naturalistic story of class aspiration is realized through a romantic return to the land, if, as we shall see, a qualified romantic return. If at first Saxon is the Anglo-Saxon idealist and Billy the urban pragmatist, by the end of the book Billy's far-fetched dreams of wealth in Sonoma are offset by Saxon's quietly realistic view of themselves and, importantly, of their neighbors.

In a 1903 review of W. J. Ghent's *Our Benevolent Feudalism* (1902) and John Graham Brooks's *The Social Unrest* (1903), London criticized the pastoral world as feudal. Ghent, sympathetic with socialism, "follows with cynic fear every aggressive act of the capitalist class," while Brooks "yearns for the perpetuation of the capitalist system." The feudalism Ghent fears would mean labor "bound to the machine," whether factory or farm, a "dependent class, living in a condition of machine servitude. . . . At the top of the new society will tower the magnate, the new feudal baron; at the bottom will be found the

wastrels and inefficient."[21] London realistically saw that the day of the yeoman farmer was over, at least in California's large-scale industrial farming, as detailed in Norris's *Octopus*. Yet *The Valley of the Moon*, despite its realism, also embraces the long-standing myth of the return to nature to heal the ills of modern urban existence. Perhaps it is a rejoinder to *The People of the Abyss*, where London argued that if only the stunted remnants of the Anglo-Saxons could be transported to America and its healthful climate, they would redevelop into the fine specimens of manhood and womanhood he believed they were meant to be. Mark Pittenger sees such an interest in rehabilitating Others in "farm colonies of delinquents and orphans" as demonstrating a racialist belief that "the biological core of human nature could be changed through contact with the beneficial effects of rural life." In *The Iron Heel*, Pittenger notes, London saw that the future did not belong to the "rabble."[22] If *The Valley of the Moon* hopes to reform the individual—and through individuals, society at large—with a new Jeffersonianism, it also shows that being "reformed" can be difficult, and an idealized nature has a tenuous hold on reality. The romance of nature is clearly undercut in the novel's conclusion, in which a pregnant Saxon Roberts, still full of hopes for living in "Nature," is silenced by her husband Billy's descriptions of future wealth from the clay mine.[23] One is tempted at first to see Billy's plans as practical and Saxon's musings on her pregnancy as part of the romantic nature around them, but the entire narrative has demonstrated the opposite: whereas Saxon wants simply to live, Billy wants to become a land magnate in order to fulfill his dreams of success.

London was inspired by an article in the *Saturday Evening Post*, LeRoy Armstrong's "The Man Who Came Back: Two Twentieth Century Pilgrims and Where They Landed"; he tore out the story and penciled in its margins, "Novel Motif."[24] A Chicago typesetter, Armstrong relates his slide into drinking and loafing after the death of their baby and the loss of his job, until his wife, Mary, suggests they imitate their settler forebears by heading west. They take a train to Colorado and then walk the thousand miles over the Rockies to the West Coast, stopping along the way to earn money. At last they find their valley and have a baby. *The Valley of the Moon* certainly derives from "the 'back to the land' stories,'" Charles N. Watson Jr. observes; he speculates that the Londons' "preoccupation with barrenness and fertility" may have led London "to make a significant departure" from Armstrong, replacing the male point of view with the female, subordinating Billy to Saxon, who leads him to their valley. Her "penetration and sensitivity . . . serves as a corrective to Billy's emotional

gyrations and egotistical bluster."[25] Saxon displays the opposite of Frona Welse's racism, which is also a key difference between Saxon and her husband.

Race in its important structural and thematic roles in *The Valley of the Moon* calls into doubt traditional gender and race hierarchies. Certainly, Saxon, like Frona in *A Daughter of the Snows*, displays what Watson calls a "religion of race—a belief in Anglo-Saxon adventurism and her own forebears as its embodiment."[26] One of her favorite objects is a chest of drawers containing the poems of her pioneer mother, Daisy Brown (named after Charmian's poet-mother), who was legendary to California women. Like Frona, Saxon also worships the "heroic figure of her father," the "captain of cavalry who died before she could know him."[27] But it is her mother who provides examples to her in her particular westward quest. Watson sees that "Saxon's myth-making is more than a hunger for lost security. It is an espousal of her mother's qualities of mind and character—the raw courage, the 'grit,'" of the one who shepherded the family across the plains and held them together when they reached California.[28] Saxon muses over the "great adventure of westering, 'palpitating and real, shimmering in the sun-flashed dust of ten thousand hoofs, . . . across a continent, the great hegira of the land-hungry Anglo-Saxon,' through which, like 'a flying shuttle, weaving the golden dazzling thread of personality, moved the form of her little, indomitable mother'" (*Valley*, 50–51). Watson agrees that "Many readers, viewing Saxon's emotions in light of later manifestations of Germanic and Anglo-American racism, . . . find her adulation of the 'land-hungry Anglo-Saxon' ominous." She does not escape "the taint of racism, nor does London himself." Watson also remarks that Billy's and Saxon's attitudes reflect not London's racialism per se but more so the "perennial form of working-class paranoia, . . . aggravated during periods of economic hardship when the competition for jobs is the most fierce. The same impulse appears in Bert, Billy's friend, who laments their kind as "'the last of the Mohegans'" (155), an echo of the older frontier James Fenimore Cooper wrote about. However, it is in the gendered difference that Watson most effectively locates Saxon and Billy's differences in racial views and, closely related, their competing versions of their future on the land. As he observes, "London carefully distinguishes . . . between Saxon's pride of ancestry" ("*ubi sunt* meditations, 'dreaming of the arcadian days of her people, when they had not lived in cities nor been vexed with labor unions and employers' associations,'" 178), and "the more belligerent chauvinism of Billy and Bert." When Bert rants about the disappearance of the "'old white stock'" (155), "Saxon holds herself

aloof; nor does she chime in with Billy's tirade against socialism as the haven of 'a lot of fat Germans an' greasy Russian Jews'" (170). When Billy observes the many Portuguese farms near San Leandro, and he grumbles that "'the free-born American ain't got no room left in his own land,'" Saxon replies, "'Then it's his own fault.'" Billy argues that Americans could farm like the Portuguese if they wanted to, but that they "'ain't much given to livin' like a pig offen leavin's.'" Saxon responds that "'Not in the country, maybe. . . . But I've seen an awful lot of Americans living like pigs in the cities'" (303). Billy snorts that the Portuguese "'needn't get chesty with me, I can tell you that much—just because they've jiggerooed us out of our land an' everything,'" to which Saxon coolly replies that the Portuguese are "'not showing any signs of chestiness'" (315). Only sometimes does she join Billy in his xenophobia. As Watson concludes, "Her sense of proportion and decency more than once offsets the extremes of Billy's racism, and hers is the dominant point of view throughout the novel."[29]

The book opens with a scene in the hellish laundry where Saxon works. Saxon's employment in a laundry contrasts with her disagreeably grimy home and recalls *Martin Eden*; as in that book, laundry takes on a symbolic function. It suggests the novel's themes of racial purity, of health and cleanliness as opposed to the degradation of the city, and Saxon's various attempts to "lighten" herself and Billy, from her carefully starched lingerie to her race-proud fantasies.

Saxon meets the flaxen-haired Billy Roberts, a teamster, at the picnic, and the two instantly fall in love, despite the fact that, like LeRoy Armstrong, Saxon holds a dim opinion of labor organizers. As she contemplates this potential escape from her toil at the laundry, she imagines she can abandon one kind of "whiteness" for a better one:

> So blond was he that she was reminded of stage-types she had seen, such as Ole Olson and Yon Yonson; but there resemblance ceased. . . . [H]e had none of the awkwardness of the Scandinavian immigrant. On the contrary, he was one of those rare individuals that radiate muscular grace through the ungraceful man-garments of civilization. . . . She felt, rather than perceived, the calm and certitude of all the muscular play of him, and she felt, too, the promise of easement and rest that was especially grateful and craved-for by one who had incessantly, for six days and at top-speed, ironed fancy starch. (*Valley*, 15–16)

Billy seems the incarnation of her dreams, his blondness and grace set off by his expensive "skin" of the fifty-dollar suit, both markers of his status in her

world: "Saxon was glowing. Here was a man, a protector, something to lean against." She tells him of her "Saxon" ancestors:

> "They were wild, like Indians, only they were white. And they had blue eyes, and yellow hair, and they were awful fighters."
>
> As she talked, Billy followed her solemnly, his eyes steadily turned on hers.
>
> "Never heard of them," he confessed. "Did they live anywhere around here?"
>
> She laughed.
>
> "No. They lived in England. They were the first English, and you know the Americans came from the English. We're Saxons, you an' me, an' Mary an' Bert, and all the Americans that are real Americans, you know, and not Dagoes and Japs and such." (*Valley*, 21–22)

But to her delight Billy recalls that his father was from Maine, adopted by a gold-miner who fought against the Modocs; among Indian prisoners is a white child, to whom the miner gives his name, Roberts. "'They figured he was about five years old. He didn't know nuthin' but Indian.'" Billy says his mother came from Ohio, and describes his parents' migration west. They find that both their fathers fought in the Civil War, as did Mary's, Bert's girlfriend. Bert is annoyed at their mutual celebration: "'They're thicker than mush in no time,'" he grumbles; "'You'd think they'd know each other a week already.'" Saxon retorts: "'Oh, but we knew each other longer than that. . . . Before ever we were born our folks were walkin' across the plains together.'" Billy chimes in, "'We're the real goods, Saxon an' me'" (22–23). Echoes of London's own heritage abound here: William Chaney, his putative biological father, was from Maine; "Billy" is a diminutive for William. Like three of the novel's fathers, John London fought in the Civil War, as did Alonzo Prentiss. Virginia Prentiss made the only real heroic westward trek of any of the adults in young Jack's life, from slavery to California. Saxon's inordinate pride in her Anglo-Saxon heritage is rooted in London's mother Flora London (also from Ohio), who lectured her son on her Anglo-Saxon superiority and pioneer ancestors. Throughout the novel, race is again a foundational factor for identity.

Billy seems well-spoken (despite his awkward grammar), dignified, quiet, and in control. But after their marriage, as Saxon takes over the management of their relationship, he recedes into boyish immaturity and impulsiveness.[30] Billy has been colonized, as it were, by the pioneer Saxon, and he will be directed by her on their symbolic journey. At first Saxon's secret weapon is her race pride, which she sees as her source for self-reliance and ability to over-

come crises, though later her understanding of community will be diversified by other immigrant groups. Yet from the beginning London undercuts the "purity" of this whiteness. Just as Billy's father was raised as an Indian child, Saxon likes to pull out of her chest of drawers not only her "Anglo-Saxon" mother's poems but also a "small package, wrapped in tissue paper and tied with ribbon," which she opens "with the deep gravity and circumstance of a priest before an altar. Appeared a little red-satin Spanish girdle, whale-boned like a tiny corset, pointed, the finery of a frontier woman who had crossed the plains. It was hand-made after the California-Spanish model of forgotten days. . . . Saxon kissed the little, red satin Spanish girdle passionately," storing it away again "in haste, with dewy eyes, abandoning the mystery and godhead of mother and all the strange enigma of living" (*Valley*, 51). The Spanish girdle is a "strange enigma" indeed, for it connects her not only to her pioneer ancestors but to another, not-quite-white California, a forecast of her appreciation for the diverse "races" she and Billy encounter on their journey.

In book 2, their landlady, Mercedes Higgins, teaches Saxon to wear fetching lingerie to interest her husband. As Saxon's early mentor, she eventually exerts a negative influence. As a negatively "raced" character, Watson observes, "She speaks for the dark side of London's vision, grim, cynical, nihilistic, yet full of the Dionysian energies of life and love. . . . She seems to have wandered out of some exotic romance, where as the fabled temptress, the Dark Lady of lurid nightmare, she promises both unspeakable delight and ultimate thralldom." Her neighbors suspect her of witchcraft: her face is "withered as if scorched in great heats," while her black eyes speak of an "unquenched inner conflagration" (*Valley*, 133–34). Her father was Irish and her mother Peruvian, and in London's ethnic stereotyping, this makes her "hot-blooded on both sides; and she has lived in every part of the world, including the Klondike and the South Seas." She hopes to convey her worldly experience to Saxon, especially how to "hold a man, and subtly dominate him," a power she equates "with the life force itself," but in the end Mercedes's multicultural identity reduces her to a set of stereotypes.[31] Yet she is neither a character nor a racial influence easily forgotten as Saxon and Billy go north. As Martin in death turns into a white statue, for Mercedes the opposite of life is the vision of the "salt vats" at the morgue into which bodies of the poor are tossed, another "white" image of death. Watson finds that "this particular *memento mori* has a special force because it combines the vision of death with London's other nightmare image, the social pit," yet that Mercedes's Nietzschean "self-serving ethic" is critiqued

when she cheats Saxon out of money. Similarly, she has no pity for the workers beaten by mobs: "'Most men are born stupid,'" she declares. "'They are the slaves. A few are born clever. They are the masters'" (179). Saxon "is horrified by Mercedes's contemptuous dismissal of the working class as '"cheap spawn"' who '"fester and multiply like maggots"'" (*Valley*, 182).[32]

As Saxon and Billy talk of leaving Oakland, Bert complains that Americans have been "forced" off their land, alluding to industrial farming and land-grabbing by the Southern Pacific Railroad: "'We cleared it, an' broke it, an' made the roads, an' built the cities. And there was plenty for everybody. And we went on fightin' for it. I had two uncles killed at Gettysburg'" (*Valley*, 174). But Saxon answers, "'And if they'd been smart they'd a-held on to them'" (174). Social, racial, and personal tension is building toward the inevitable bloody climax that occurs during the workers' strike and its repercussions. Saxon tries to serve as a soothing voice of reason in this scene of conflict, but fails. What helps her through the terrible months of Billy's descent into brawling and drinking as the men lose their jobs, and then Billy's injuries and jailing, becomes less her racial inheritance than her realistic sense of what is truly at stake—home in every sense of the word. Saxon identifies with her female forebears' "hard-working, hard-fighting stock" (103) but will lead her family to survive because of her ability imaginatively to "pass" across California's racial groups who represent diversity, learning the best from all to construct a new identity as a California woman. If anything, in *The Valley of the Moon*, racial mixing turns out to be life-giving and adaptive, whereas racial purity appears to be self-destructive.

While Billy is in jail and she has no money for food, Saxon takes to combing the rocks of the bay edge for mussels to eat; she is a survivor, finding a new food source just as any "islander" or refugee would. In chapter 16, in her lowest despair, Saxon argues with her brother Tom about whether socialism or any political redress can help her and Billy:

> "Two thousand years is an awfully long time," she said quietly.
>
> Her brother's tired face saddened as he noted. Then he sighed:
>
> "Well, Saxon, if it's a dream, it is a good dream."
>
> "I don't want to dream," was her reply. "I want things real. I want them now."
>
> And before her fancy passed the countless generations of the stupid lowly, the Billys and Saxons, the Berts and Marys, the Toms and Sarahs. And to what

> end? . . . It was as if she suffered false imprisonment. There was some mistake. She would find the way out. (*Valley*, 258)

This "way out" is inspired not by ideology but by a young boy in his skiff Saxon meets one day when she is foraging for mussels. He shares his sailing and fishing knowledge with her and answers her questions:

> "What do I want?" he repeated after her.
>
> Turning his head slowly, he followed the sky-line, pausing especially when his eyes rested landward on the brown Contra Costa hills, and seaward, past Alcatraz, on the Golden Gate. The wistfulness in his eyes was overwhelming and went to her heart.
>
> "That," he said, sweeping the circle of the world with a wave of his arm. . . . "Don't you sometimes feel you'd die if you didn't know what's beyond them hills an' what's beyond the other hills behind them hills? An' the Golden Gate! There's the Pacific Ocean beyond, and China, an' Japan, an' India, an' . . . an' all the coral islands. You can go anywhere out through the Golden Gate—to Australia, to Africa, to the seal islands, to the North Pole, to Cape Horn. Why, all them places are just waitin' for me to come an' see 'em. I've lived in Oakland all my life, but I'm not going to live in Oakland the rest of my life, not by a long shot. I'm goin' to get away." (*Valley*, 263–64)

Crow sees this adventurous boy—an incarnation of London—as a "counterpoint" to the dominant "deterministic message" of the novel.[33] Certainly the desire to experience "foreign" lands is bound up with Saxon's sense of personal freedom, if not so much in her husband and his peers.

Saxon translates her vision for Billy when he is released, persuading him to leave Oakland to look for a better life as a farmer: "'we want to know all about all kinds of land, close to the big cities as well as back in the mountains,'" she urges. She seems to see that her goal of personal freedom and their goals as a family lie in knowledge of new places and people. Billy's initial response doesn't reveal understanding of her project: at one of their first train stops, he chortles, "'Gee!—this must be the Porchugeeze headquarters'" (*Valley*, 303). When he refuses to ask such residents any questions, Saxon decides she will: "'We've got to win out at this game, and the way is to know. Look at all these Portuguese. . . . What made the Americans clear out? How do the Portuguese make it go? Don't you see, We've got to ask millions of questions'" (305). Saxon

has already observed that some "Americans live like pigs." She urges him to speak to the locals whatever their origins, as with the telephone lineman of the opening of book 3, who answers their queries about why immigrant groups have flourished on farms while white "Americans" have not: "'We don't use our headpieces right. Something's wrong with us,'" he says (310).

Billy seems to find confirmation of his class and race prejudices on the journey, while she learns from new communities and forges friendships across class, race, geographical, ethnic, and social lines. Billy is determined to become a bonanza king like Elam Harnish: "'Just the same,' Billy held stubbornly, 'large scale's a whole lot better'n small scale like all these dinky gardens'" (304–05). Saxon continues to point out examples of immigrants' success. Her ability to adapt to her surroundings is highlighted by the figure of Mrs. Mortimer, an independent woman farmer who employs Chinese workers and has learned much from their horticultural practices. She becomes a mentor to the Robertses, like later guides Jack and Clara Hastings and the bohemians Mark Hall and his wife, more autobiographical figures. As Billy and Saxon wander, they learn that the Anglo-Saxon race "lost the land," as Crow points out, "because they were not worthy of it, did not farm it with ecological respect, and thus fell victim to the Naturalistic forces of the city."[34] Mrs. Mortimer, Jack Hastings, and others teach them "sound economics and ecology—the management of the home place. The true farming of California is small, intensive, in the style of the Asians and non-Anglo-Saxon Europeans who have inherited the land, not the style of the bonanza ranchers, about whom Norris wrote, who earlier had raped it," argues Crow.[35] A new friend they make on a train, Benson, urges:

> "We'll soon enter the valley. You bet I saw. First thing, in Japan, the terraced hillsides. Take a hill so steep you couldn't drive a horse up it. No bother to them. They terraced it—a stone wall, and good masonry, six feet high, a level terrace six feet wide; up and up, walls and terraces, the same thing all the way, straight into the air, walls upon walls, terraces upon terraces. . . . Same thing everywhere I went, in Greece, in Ireland. . . . They went around and gathered every bit of soil they could find, gleaned it and even stole it by the shovelful or handful, and carried it up the mountains on their backs and built farms—BUILT them, MADE them, on the naked rock. . . . "My God!" Billy muttered in awe-stricken tones. "Our folks never done that. No wonder they lost out." (*Valley*, 365)

Benson serves as a useful history lesson as well as furnishing the right farming ideas, but Billy is obstinate: "'It was our folks that made this country,' Billy

reflected. 'Fought for it, opened it up, did everything—' 'But develop it,' Benson caught him up. 'We did our best to destroy it, as we destroyed the soil of New England.'" Retorts Billy, "'We'll never be goin' around smellin' out an' swipin' bits of soil an' carryin' it up a hill in a basket. The United States is big yet. I don't care what Benson or any of 'em says, the United States ain't played out.'" But Saxon reminds him, "'We're getting an education'" (*Valley*, 365–66).

The farmer-poet Mark Hall, whom the Robertses encounter in Sonoma, tells them his theory of the history and fate of the American West, echoing London's favorite agricultural themes:

> "When you think of the glorious chance," he said. "A new country, bounded by the oceans, situated just right in latitude, with the richest land and vastest natural resources of any country in the world, settled by immigrants who had thrown off all the leading strings of the Old World and were in the humor for democracy. There was only one thing to stop them from perfecting the democracy they started, and that thing was greediness.
>
> "They started gobbling everything in sight like a lot of swine, and while they gobbled democracy went to smash. Gobbling became gambling. . . . They moved over the face of the land like so many locusts. They destroyed everything—the Indians, the soil, the forests, just as they destroyed the buffalo and the passenger pigeon. Their morality in business and politics was gambler morality. Their laws were gambling laws—how to play the game. . . . And democracy gone clean to smash." (*Valley*, 413–14)

In contrast, Saxon and Billy learn from Hall of the "Potato King" of Stockton, Sing Kee: "He was only a coolie, and he smuggled himself into the United States twenty years ago. Started at day's wages, then peddled vegetables in a couple of baskets slung on a stick, and after that opened up a store in Chinatown in San Francisco. . . . Then he jumped in and leased twelve hundred acres at seven dollars an acre. . . . I'll tell you one thing, though—give me the Chinese to deal with. He's honest. His word is as good as his bond" (*Valley*, 422–23). When Billy and Saxon encounter Greek immigrants in a fishing village, Billy's disdain is contrasted with Saxon's curiosity. There they encounter another farmer-poet and his wife, Jack and Clara Hastings, who express disgust over the "land-hogs" who have "abandoned farms by the tens of thousands." The same thing, Hastings says, is going on, "the same land-robbing and hogging, over the rest of the country." Clara Hastings adds, "'It's the same in our valley. All the old farms are dropping into ruin.'" She mentions one farm, once a

"perfect paradise" (and one that evokes London's Beauty Ranch): "There were dams and lakes, beautiful meadows, lush hayfields, red hills of grape-lands, hundreds of acres of good pasture, heavenly groves of pines and oaks, a stone winery, stone barns, grounds—oh, I couldn't describe it in hours. When Mrs. Bell died, the family scattered, and the leasing began. It's a ruin to-day." "'It's become a profession,'" Hastings tells the Robertses, in which the "'movers. . . . lease, clean out and gut a place in several years, and then move on. They're not like the foreigners, the Chinese, and Japanese, and the rest. In the main they're a lazy, vagabond, poor-white sort, who do nothing else but skin the soil and move, skin the soil and move.'" Hastings turns suddenly on Billy, bitterly suggesting the Robertses follow the poor-white model and become tenant farmers: "'But it's wicked!' Saxon wrung out. 'It's wicked advice.'" Hastings counters. "'Help yourself. If you don't, the immigrants will.'" Mrs. Hastings explains that he doesn't mean it: "'He spends all his time on the ranch in conserving the soil. . . . He's even planted a hundred thousand trees. He's always draining and ditching to stop erosion, and experimenting with pasture grasses. And every little while he buys some exhausted adjoining ranch and starts building up the soil'" (432–44). Sure enough, Saxon and Billy encounter "whole villages—Chinese, Japanese, Italians, Portuguese, Swiss, Hindus, Koreans, Norwegians, Danes, French, Armenians, Slavs, almost every nationality save American. . . . Most of the land was owned by Americans, who lived away from it and were continually selling it to the foreigners" (437).

When they find a valley to settle in, Billy is bent on large-scale development through horse breeding and drayage and also by excavating clay on their ranch for a brick manufacturer, which "links him with the capitalists of Oakland whom he earlier had fought." He seems to be unable "to follow his own vision," as Crow observes.[36] We must remember, however, that neither Saxon's initial idealism of going "back to the land" nor her more realistically evolved sense of being within a diverse community of knowledge—and race—were Billy's visions in the first place. Community versus individualism, the openness to racial "others" versus traditional white working-class racism and suspicion of foreigners, are gendered and opposed in this novel's complex values for the protagonists, who at the end seem somewhat separated. With its characters essentially "flawed" by competing ideas of identity, race, and class, as Crow asserts, *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore is devoid of the sense of hope that characterizes *The Valley of the Moon*. Though Billy and Saxon have racial prejudices, one has the feeling they will be good neighbors and will progress.

Not so John Pathurst. *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore is structured as race war, as with Thomas Dixon's *The Klansman*, though it fails at clearly promoting such because Pathurst is unlikeable and unbelievable as a hero. Like almost everything else about him, his racism makes readers reject him.

RACIALISM OR IRONY IN *THE MUTINY OF THE ELSINORE*?

"Make Westing," a short story from *When God Laughs* (1908), is a gruesome prediction of the events of *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore, published six years later. George Dorety is the only paying passenger on the *Mary Rogers*, captained by "Big Dan Cullen, hairy and black, vested with the power of life and death."[37] After being beaten back for seven weeks by gales while trying to round Cape Horn, the *Mary Rogers* finally begins to run before "a howling southeaster," but an accident occurs: one of the crew that Cullen has ordered up into the arms to hoist sails falls overboard, even though at that particular moment "a benignant sun" is "shining down" through the clouds. A cry is raised and a life buoy thrown overboard, but in horror Dorety and the crew watch the sailor, nicknamed Mops, recede into the dark waves behind the stern of the ship. Cullen calls out "'Hard down your helm!'" to continue to "make Westing," leaving Mops to drown. Dorety tells Cullen that when they return to San Francisco he will swear out a warrant. Later, when no one is looking, Cullen loosens the lines of a main staysail block and pushes it toward the unsuspecting Dorety: "The heavy block hurtled through the air, smashing Dorety's head like an egg-shell." Cullen records in his log: *"Had often warned Mr. Dorety about the danger he ran because of his carelessness on deck."* Cullen reads over "his literary effort with admiration" and blots the ink. "He lighted a cigar and stared before him. He felt the *Mary Rogers* lift, and heel, and surge along, and knew that she was making nine knots. A smile of satisfaction slowly dawned on his black and hairy face. Well, anyway, he had made his westing and fooled God" (1321–22).

In *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore, John Pathurst is a popular playwright who decides to get away for awhile as a paying guest on a commercial sailing ship from Baltimore to San Francisco. Bitter in success, he feels as Martin Eden did that there is only despair in celebrityhood, and like Trefathan of "The Night-Born" he denounces love and human companionship as lies. Yet over the course of the voyage he falls in love with the captain's daughter, Margaret West, and leads officers and crew against a mutiny in a melodramatic pastiche

of events framed by his ideas of racial conflict between whites and other races. The racism in *Mutiny* is even more pronounced than in *Adventure*, and the novel remains a source of embarrassment to London scholars. How could the same Jack London who wrote such sensitive portraits of racial Others and such stinging attacks on white racism in the South Seas—as in "Mauki," "The Chinago," or "Koolau the Leper"—have written what many contend is drivel?

But a closer look is revealing. Pathurst at first looks much like the other arrogant, close-minded, and ultimately self-destructive "inevitable white" male protagonists whom London caricatures satirically. Though his ironies are often overlooked, London has furnished a surface narrator and another one underneath. Pathurst suggests an incarnation of London at his self-loathing worst, pandering to the public with stereotypes and adventures with eighteenth-century pirate clichés, not to mention improbable romance. The only other London character who might understand John Pathurst would be Dick Forrest (*Little Lady of the Big House*), and one shudders at what their collective wisdom would amount to. A broader perspective viewing him suggests that perhaps we are not supposed to like him, and the novel is a racial burlesque. Yet as in *A Daughter of the Snows* it is hard to guess London's intentions. Perhaps because he needed money he wrote a sensationalistic potboiler, a move that reflected his also having relinquished things that had previously balanced his intention to write for cash, namely socialism. Joseph Sciambra calls *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore London's "racial magnum opus," an "unusual and complex amalgamation of different sources [that] included Jordan, Kidd, Woodruff, and even his childhood favorite Du Chaillu and Frederick Marryat. Through racial memories, Pathurst dreamed back to the distant lives of the early, Aryan warriors like Hengist and Horsa," whom London read about in Du Chaillu's *The Viking Age*, the story of the conquering of England by Teutons.[38] He sees it is a surprising reversion to some of London's earliest racialist notions.[39] There is yet another factor: London had not been to Hawai'i in awhile, but he lived in the islands for many months during each of his last two years. In particular, "The Red One" and "The Water Baby" reflect a very different view of himself and the world; they mount attacks on white hegemony. As I explore in chapter 8, in these very late stories, written from June to October 1916, he had read Jung and experienced insights not only into his own psychological conflicts but into the "race" as the human race, united by virtue of the "collective unconscious."

Though he does not achieve one, Pathurst certainly seems in need of a new view of himself. His bad temper is evident at the start of the novel in his com-

plaints about the cold in Baltimore, his boarding the *Elsinore* being delayed, and his attempt—rebuffed—to rent the captain's cabin. He tells the reader he is not "keen" on the voyage but is undertaking it because

> there was nothing else I was keen on. For some time now life had lost its savour. . . . I had lost taste for my fellow-men and all their foolish, little, serious endeavours. For a far longer period I had been dissatisfied with women. I had endured them, but I had been too analytic of the faults of their primitiveness, of their almost ferocious devotion to the destiny of sex, to be enchanted with them. And I had come to be possessed by what seemed to me the futility of art—a pompous legedermain, a consummate charlatanry that deceived not only its devotees but its practitioners. (*Mutiny*, 13)

Pathurst says he suffers from "the world-weariness, intellectual, artistic, sensational" that can come upon a young man (57), reflecting London's own disillusionments. He imagines running away, Martin Eden–like:

> Really, I had been, and was, very sick. Mad thoughts of isolating myself entirely from the world had hounded me. I had even canvassed the idea of going to Molokai and devoting the rest of my years to the lepers—I, who was thirty years old, and healthy and strong, who had no particular tragedy, who had a bigger income than I knew how to spend, who by my own achievement had put my name on the lips of men and proved myself a power to be reckoned with—I was that mad that I had considered the lazar house for a destiny. (*Mutiny*, 57)

If Pathurst is this depressed, then it is odd that as a playwright he does not think on the name "Elsinore," but the reader picks up some clues. The bad mood, the cold, the uncertainty, the disgust with life presented in the first scenes of *Hamlet*, especially the sense that the world is dangerously unbalanced, reappear here. *Hamlet*'s themes of war, betrayal, mutiny, Oedipal battles, tormented sexuality, psychological projection, and suicidal depression are all evident as well, beginning with Pathurst's disgust at the world and its ways, which, like Hamlet, he cannot see as caused by his own dark fears. Margaret, despite her eventual pledge of troth to Pathurst, is unavailable enough and a conflicted enough love object throughout most of the novel to suggest Gertrude and Ophelia. And, suggesting Hamlet's crude rejection of Ophelia, Pathurst has "expressly stipulated" before joining the vessel that there be no women aboard (the sign of his divorce from life), though of course Margaret is aboard. Claudius appears in Pathurst's and the crew's brutishness. In the end in

both works, bodies are strewn about the stage, social hierarchies set "right," if the underlying causes for discord are not. Pathurst's mind busies itself not with Hamlet but in sizing up the crew of the *Elsinore* as though they were a cast of characters in his latest work, which the *Dirigo* crew presumably were for London. But Pathurst's characterizations of them are mere stereotypes.

Given his combination of naïveté, lack of empathy with others, and blinding racism, one wonders how Pathurst could be a successful playwright, how such a man could be expected to draw believable characters—beginning with himself. His obsession with the captain is just as fantastic as his horror and disgust at the crew. Pathurst compares Captain West to a "king or emperor, as remote as the farthest fixed star, as neutral as a proposition of Euclid," and whose "thin lips" remind Pathurst of actress Sarah Bernhardt. Most importantly, his "long, lean . . . face" betrays "a touch of race I as yet could only sense" (*Mutiny*, 9), making West sound like a seafaring Percival Ford. The officers "were potent. They were iron. They were perceivers, willers, and doers. They were as of another species compared with the sailors under them" (25). But when he complains to Margaret about "lunatic" crew, he gets a Joan Lackland–like comeuppance: "'What would you? The sea is hard, Mr. Pathurst. And for our sailors we get the worst type of men. I sometimes wonder where they find them. And we do our best with them, and somehow manage to make them help us carry on our work in the world. But they are low'" (30). There is an interesting gender reversal here: Pathurst sounds like the stereotypical hysterical woman on board ship, whereas Margaret plays steady male. Despite his dislike for women, Pathurst becomes drawn to Margaret's "rounder and robuster good health" and her "firm" flesh and skin. Pathurst tells how their "noses were alike, just the hint-touch of the beak of prowess and race" (49). She could, he imagines, fulfill what is missing in him as "a physical type of the best of the womanhood of old New England" (113).

More observations of the crew lead Pathurst to more fears: "There was something wrong with all of them. Their bodies were twisted, their faces distorted, and almost without exception they were under-sized" (*Mutiny*, 49). Pathurst sees, by contrast, his Asian steward as "keen, . . . quick with intelligence" (35); perhaps with those over whom Pathurst exercises dominance he feels safe. What in *The People of the Abyss* would have aroused pity in the reader, Pathurst only sees as "a wretched muck of men," all "dead men raised out of coffins or sick men dragged from hospital beds. Sick they were—whiskey-poisoned. Starved they were, and weak from poor nutrition" (42–43).

Dissatisfied, depressed, alcoholic, and lonely, Pathurst takes pleasure in noting the crew's bestiality, racial impurity, and imbecility. By chapter 10, he has broken out in hives. He decides "the voyage [is] doomed." One sleepless night he and the second mate, Mr. Mellaire, discuss the various shortcomings of Irishmen, Scotsmen, and Greeks. The officers, mates, and even Pathurst refer to most of the crew in crude racial terms such as "sheeny" (114), "stupid herd" of "lunatics and idiots" (130), "niggers" (257), and "Dagoes" (257).

As in "Mauki," no one has really been paying attention to the crew as they should, for a "gangster clique" takes over the forecastle (*Mutiny*, 128). Instead, while the mutiny forms Pathurst muses on his fears for his race's superiority:

> Every one of us who sits aft in the high place is a blond Aryan. For'ard, leavened with a ten per cent, of degenerate blonds, the remaining ninety per cent, of the slaves that toil for us are brunettes. They will not perish. According to Woodruff, they will inherit the earth, not because of their capacity for mastery and government, but because of their skin-pigmentation which enables their tissues to resist the ravages of the sun. (*Mutiny*, 161)

Pathurst can think of the sailors only in terms of their racedness, their bare feet "scaled with patches of tar and pitch," "unbathed bodies" clothed "in the meanest of clothes, dingy, dirty, ragged, and sparse." In contrast, as he surveys the captain's dinner table, he fantasizes about "mastering and commanding, like our fathers before us, to the end of our type on the earth. Ah, well, ours is a lordly history" (161). Pathurst "sees" things as "high and low, slaves and masters, beauty and ugliness, cleanness and filth" (178–79). Such binarism and complacency will prove fatal to many of the "higher race" aboard the ship, but Pathurst imagines punishment falling only upon the nonwhite mutineers: "The rest did not matter. They were not of my world. I imagine the old-time skippers, on the middle passage, felt much the same toward their slave-cargoes in the fetid 'tween decks" (211). This type of image draws one to read the novel as ironic; London's knowledge of black slavery through Virginia Prentiss, and his portrayal of slavery in the South Seas in "Mauki" make it difficult for readers to imagine him admiring a man who thinks this way. On deck Pathurst shouts into Margaret's ear-flap with words that only Frona Welse could utter straight: "'[M]y for[e]bears were Vikings. I was seed of them in their own day. With them I have raided English coasts, dared the Pillars of Hercules, forayed the Mediterranean, and sat in the high place of government over the soft sun-warm peoples. I am Hengist and Horsa; I am of the ancient heroes, even

legendary to them.'" She laughs, "'I don't know anything about it,'" but improbably adds, "'It sounds like poetry. . . . I have heard it aforetime, when skin-clad men sang in fire-circles that pressed back the frost and night'" (241).

One evening a large cask along with three marooned sailors washes onto the decks and sends the *Elsinore*'s sailors into superstitious terrors, though Pathurst is still in a racially confident frame of mind. He just happens to be sitting up reading Franz Boas's *Mind of Primitive Man*—an unlikely choice if London is offering him as a straight, committed racialist—at two o'clock in the morning when he hears the men begin rushing around: "So fear-struck was Larry that he chattered and grimaced like an ape, and shouldered and struggled to get away from the dark and into the safety of the shaft of light that shone out of the chart-house. Tony, the Greek, was just as bad, mumbling to himself and continually crossing himself. . . . And this fear-smitten mass of human animals on our reeling poop raised my gorge. Truly, had I been a god at that moment, I should have annihilated the whole mass of them" (*Mutiny*, 249). The ship's officers are uninterested; in contrast, looking over the three marooned men, Pathurst worries as much as any crewman, "They were not blonds. They were not brunettes. Nor were they of the Brown, or Black, or Yellow. Their skin was white under a bronze of weather. Wet as was their hair, it was plainly a colourless, sandy hair. Yet their eyes were . . . topaz, pale topaz; and they gleamed and dreamed like the eyes of great cats" (256–57). In a Tarzan movie this would be where the native packers panic and refuse to enter "ju-ju country." The *Elsinore*'s Japanese cook Wada looks at the situation quite practically; he worries that the sailors will try "'Bime-by everybody kill,'" but adds,

> "They make fool with me, I fix 'em," he said vindictively. "Mebbe they kill me, all right; but I kill some, too."
>
> He threw back his coat, and I saw, strapped to the left side of his body, in a canvas sheath, so that the handle was ready to hand, a meat knife of the heavy sort that butchers hack with. He drew it forth—it was fully two feet long—and, to demonstrate its razor-edge, sliced a sheet of newspaper into many ribbons.
>
> "Huh!" he laughed sardonically. "I am Chink, monkey, damn fool, eh?—no good, eh? all rotten damn to hell. I fix 'em, they make fool with me." (*Mutiny*, 293)

"The Chink" sounds a good deal more realistic and also more manly than Pathurst, a person one would definitely want to side with in a mutiny.

The officers, Margaret, and Pathurst, along with Wada, the steward, two Japanese sailmakers, and a black boy named Buckwheat (of all things) hide in the aft quarters. Pathurst is again inspired to describe the various racial and hierarchical positions: "Buckwheat is of hopelessly of the stupid lowly," while the Japanese sailmakers are "scarcely servants, not to be called slaves, but something in between" (*Mutiny*, 321); he is unsure. Against this group are arrayed the mutinous crew. Pathurst whiles away the "watch and wait" by reading George Moore, which he finds boring (334); it is hard to see how anyone but fatuous Pathurst could be bored during a mutiny, or in the midst of one not learn anything from George Moore, an Irish novelist praised for his gritty realism.

But soon people are getting killed. The ship lurches along out of control or sits becalmed. Although Pathurst's group has captured the food from the mutineers, they have the steering tackle and are in control of the ship. Pathurst tosses stale bread overboard to shoot the seabirds who gather, and he pursues his game "like Midshipman Easy, like Frank Mildmay, like Frank Reade, Jr.," a shockingly childish way of regarding the events around him. Despite what Woodruff said, he consoles himself that

> Nevertheless, here we are, masters of matter, adventurers in the micro-organic, planet-weighers, sun-analysers, star-rovers, god-dreamers, equipped with the human wisdom of all the ages, and yet . . . we are a lot of primitive beasts, fighting bestially. . . . And over this menagerie of beasts Margaret and I, with our Asiatics under us, rule top-dog. We are all dogs—there is no getting away from it. And we, the fair-pigmented ones, by the seed of our ancestry rulers in the high place, shall remain top-dog over the rest of the dogs. (*Mutiny*, 366–67)

Only Pathurst could celebrate the "sun-analysers" and "top-dogs" of the Anglo-Saxon race when most of that race has been eliminated aboard the *Elsinore* with no relief in sight. He sounds like Claudius doughtily celebrating his marriage, "with mirth in funeral." But survive he does, along with Margaret, the steward, and a few others, and the couple make their honeymoon plans as they steer the ship to port. It could only happen as a romantic ending to a popular novel. As the protagonists of *The Valley of the Moon* oscillate among realism, naturalism, and romance, the "hero" of *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore, obsessed with the naturalistic elements of his environment but deliberately ignoring their true meaning, instead is rewarded with a foolish romance of race. This makes for a drastically lesser novel, as it did in *Adventure* with the similarly undeserving Sheldon. *The Valley of the Moon* and *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore

are novels within the typical racialized genres of the times, *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore based on Euro-American travel adventures and *The Valley of the Moon* on an American diasporic narrative.[40] They both, however differently, feature characters trying to find a home. Neither does this altogether well, but they both speak to London's artistic quest for a spiritual home.

EIGHT

"Mongrels" to "Young Wise Ones"

On the Mexican Revolution and *On the Makaloa Mat*

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A passage from charmian's *Log of the* Snark speaks to Jack and Charmian London's continuing quest for many homes:

> "We have lived a little, you and I, Mate-Woman," Jack said this morning, as we took our book under an awning out of the glare. We had been talking over our travel experiences and the people we had met, from Cuba to Molokai, from Paris to the Marquesas. A vivid life it is, and we hold it and cherish it every minute, every hour of to-day, and yesterday, and the fair thought of days that are coming.[1]

The Londons continued their travels after the *Dirigo* voyage, spending long weeks aboard their new sailboat, the *Roamer*, on the bays and sloughs of the Sacramento River delta, a home-away-from-home that provided relaxation and healthy exercise. The ranch had its demands, and London was writing steadily on several books. He claimed, "I have notes for over 100 novels filed away on my shelves, and possibly 500 short stories."[2] However, the strain of trying to continue his frenzied pace at writing and on the ranch took their toll, and his drinking became an acute problem. Two trips in their last two years were of great consequence, their trip to Vera Cruz so London could report on the Mexican Revolution, and their two long trips to Hawai'i in 1915 and 1916, where London found another second home and wrote some of his most powerful short stories.

London biographers and critics have long described September 1912 to May 1916 as a period of professional decline or a loss of direction, when London virtually ceased writing short stories and instead concentrated on longer works: *The Abysmal Brute* (1913), *John Barleycorn* (1913), the three Sonoma novels of 1913–16, *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore (1914), *The Scarlet Plague* (1915), *The Star Rover* (1915), the Michael and Jerry dog books (1917), and *The*

Acorn-Planter: A California Forest Play (1916). Notwithstanding the absence of short stories—his best genre—and his many physical and personal problems of his last several years, London's "decline" of 1912–16 did not mean he stopped producing meaningful work. The novels from this period contain racial themes of self-definition, personal and artistic. In their own ways, each of these late works speaks to the search for homes, whether on Dick Forrest's hacienda, in a new world swept nearly empty by a terrible plague unleashed from a Berkeley laboratory, or in the astral search for the imprisoned self through time and space. Space constraints prohibit me from examining each of these works in detail, so instead I concentrate only on the late works that make race the centerpiece of their narratives and themes, his Mexican Revolution journalism and the last of his late Hawaiian tales, "The Water Baby."

During the last two years of his life London continued to suffer more setbacks in his financial, professional, and personal lives. As before, in 1912–13 especially, his bodily illnesses brought with them an illness of spirit. The "White Logic," as London referred to John Barleycorn's inescapable alcoholism, had almost completely subsumed the writer. He suffered several ailments, including the onset of kidney disease. Only in his last few months in Hawai'i in 1916, after reading of Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious*, was London able to write some of his greatest works, none of which display the racialism of *Adventure* or *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore. In Hawai'i his health improved for a time when he substituted fruit juice for highballs, and rest and exercise for worry and overwork. London's last Hawaiian stories revive the values of a better possible world, what critic Jessica Loudermilk calls a "supraracial" home for brother- and sisterhood.[3] In his last few months London experienced a spiritual reawakening by conceiving his imaginative self within a global community, a regeneration he desperately needed.

An example of London's worst temper during this time appears in a February 24, 1914, letter he wrote to Joan. He remained frustrated that Bessie would not let their daughters visit the ranch while Charmian as there, which meant that if he wanted to see them he had to arrange visits and outings with them in San Francisco and nearby. Responding to a letter from the thirteen-year-old Joan in which she defended her mother, he wrote, "Years ago I warned your mother that if I were denied the opportunity of forming you, sooner or later I would grow disinterested in you, I would develop a disgust, and that I would turn down the page. Of course, your mother, who is deaf to all things spiritual, and appreciative, and understanding, smiled to herself and discounted

what I told her. Your mother today understands me no more than has she ever understood me—which is no understanding at all."[4] Then, once again the Spencerian stockbreeder, he explains the "forming" of Joan:

> When I grow tired or disinterested in anything, I experience a disgust which settles for me that thing forever. I turn the page down there and then. When a colt on the ranch, early in its training, shows that it is a kicker or a bucker or a bolter or a balker, I try patiently and for a long time to remove, by my training, such deleterious traits; and then at the end of a long time if I find that these vicious traits continue, suddenly there comes to me a disgust, and I say Let the colt go. Kill it, sell it, or give it away. (*Letters*, 1298)

He notes that he will fulfill all his financial and other duties toward Joan but threatens that if she persists in defending Bessie, "whatever you do from now on, I am uninterested. I desire to know neither your failures nor your successes; wherefore please no more tell me of your markings in High School, and no longer send me your compositions" (*Letters*, 1298). He says that now he will not pay for her to attend university. This was a grave turn in their relationship and hurt both of them deeply—one of London's favorite things was discussing Joan's progress in school and receiving her writings, and she loved sending them. He concludes, "Unless I should accidentally meet you on the street, I doubt if I shall ever see you again. If you should be dying, and should ask for me at your bedside, I should surely come; on the other hand, if I were dying I should not care to have you at my bedside. A ruined colt is a ruined colt, and I do not like ruined colts" (1300–1301). Here London speaks of his beloved elder daughter Joan in the same way racialists viewed "breeds," while his being finished with something, "turning down the page," connotes his status as author and breadwinner. Two years later, shortly before his death London made up via letter with both Joan and Becky, but he never saw them again: he died on the day in 1916 they were to reunite and meet for lunch at a favorite restaurant at Saddle Rock, with a visit to Lake Merritt. One of his writings on the night before his death is an affectionate letter to Joan confirming their plans, signed "Daddy" (1604).

Charmian London's descriptions of her husband's last months recount both the illnesses and other difficulties he was facing and the extraordinary need he seemed to have for affirmation of his identity as a person and artist in a way the usual trappings of family or fame had not provided him. She notes that his old ways of coping, such as alcohol, no longer worked. To her, he was

in dire need of Jung when he encountered him at the beginning of June. She was surprised but deeply grateful for the sense of renewal Jung provided him, and noted the sudden burst of what she called "personal" stories, as opposed to his "impersonal" work of the preceding years.[5]

Charmian says that by the beginning of 1916 London was increasingly "cut off from the larger fulfillment of himself." He insisted to her his best work would come when his financial condition improved, but she wasn't so sure. Throughout his life, she felt, his was "a princely ego that struggled for full expression, and realized it in only a small degree." In his search for a "congenial environment" for his personal and professional lives, his struggle for freedom from the social pit was followed by growing consciousness that he was "part of the whole ego-substance," and he "proceeded to fight for the proper environment for egos other than his own. Hence Jack the individualist, and Jack the socialist." Notwithstanding his worldwide recognition, earnings, and pleasure in living on Beauty Ranch, in 1916 his restless seeking of "the accumulation of knowledge" meant, according to Charmian, that "with all this in his grasp, the instinct to search still drove him on. He was doomed to remain unsatisfied, and unsatisfied he remained. The ultimate aim could not be fame, nor money, nor anything the world had in its gift." For a time, she laments, he even gave up on love. He would become depressed, argumentative, and angry, then contrite, begging for her patience. He could engage in "tirade[s] against the infinitesimal natures of folk" but continue to invite a tableful of people for dinner every night. Charmian sees both his melancholy withdrawal and his feverish insistence on socializing as attempts to get "away from an insatiable ego," a struggle waged throughout his life: "And all he had really succeeded in was to obscure the demands that he had by his white logic interpreted, and had striven so hard to placate." London was unable to keep food down at times, took no exercise, and overworked. His kidney problems grew more involved. He suffered from headaches and from rheumatism. Charmian records that he made "no attempt to retard an illness that could not be less than fatal if not checked," as if he were "restless for rest" and aware that the end was coming. His earlier heavy drinking had been an attempt to drug "his perception of futility," and even despite his more healthy ways in Hawai'i in 1916, she tells of various illnesses, of depression likely resulting from his kidney pain, and from his trying narcotics to alleviate the pain. She feared she was witnessing "the longing, at least of his unconscious mind, for cessation of effort to continue existence."[6] Such penetrating analysis of her husband is not the norm in Charmian's biography,

which forgivably tends toward hagiography. This sharp change in her tone indicates a terrible crisis. London planned a thorough review of Jung's volumes on their planned 1917 voyage to Japan. Since his first and incomplete reading of Jung's ideas of the psychic community of humankind inspired some of his finest stories, collected in *On the Makaloa Mat*, perhaps further exposure to Jung's ideas would have aided him in his personal life.

This chapter contrasts the racial dimensions of London's 1914 Mexican Revolution war correspondence for *Collier's Weekly* with those in "The Water Baby," among those in *On the Makaloa Mat* written in 1916. There are tremendous differences in how he portrayed racial Others (and himself), though both discourses are directed by his conflicting ideas on race and how race relates to identity and artistic production. London was able in his last summer—partly as a result of living in Hawai'i for most of 1915–16 and reexperiencing its diversity and promise, and partly as a result of his reading of the work of Jung—to replace both the longer works he was tending to and the destructive racial prejudices of the Mexican War dispatches with another turnaround in his sense of the "universal kinship"—and die having demonstrated in his last short fiction a renewed belief in humanity.

THE LEAD-UP TO THE 1914 U.S. INVASION OF MEXICO

On February 5, 1911, socialists in Los Angeles held a rally at the Labor Temple to express their support for Mexicans opposing the military dictatorship of Porfirio Díaz. Invited to speak at the meeting but unable to attend, London wrote an open letter of support to be read at the meeting, then published in the *Los Angeles Citizen* on February 11, 1911:

> To the dear, brave comrades of the Mexican Revolution:
>
> We socialists, anarchists, hobos, chicken thieves, outlaws and undesirable citizens of the United States, are with you heart and soul in your effort to overthrow slavery and autocracy in Mexico. You will notice we are not respectable in these days of the reign of property. All the names you are being called, we have been called. And when graft and greed get up and begin to call names, honest men, brave men, patriotic men and martyrs can expect nothing else than to be called chicken thieves and outlaws.
>
> So be it. But I for one wish that there were more chicken thieves and outlaws of the sort that formed the gallant band that took Mexicali, of the sort that is

> heroically enduring the prison holes of Diaz, of the sort that is fighting and dying and sacrificing in Mexico today.
>
> I subscribe myself a chicken thief and revolutionist.
>
> Jack London (*Letters*, 980–81)

In the newspapers London criticized U.S. intervention in Mexico as purely an economic matter:

> I hope the people of the United States will resent this latest action of the United States government in proposing to overawe the Mexican revolutionists. . . . The action of the government is logical. It regards dollars, not democracy, and therefore it will send its troops to protect its dollars. . . . If the United States government wants to invade Mexico, it can find plenty of legal pretexts, but it would be a burning shame. It might end the revolution, but it certainly cannot crush the revolutionary spirit in Mexico.[7]

In "The Mexican," published the same year, London was very much in sympathy with the Mexican revolutionaries' resistance to brutal dictatorship and revealed himself to be one of them in spirit. Headlines began to appear claiming that London was leading a contingent of Mexican rebels and that he had been wounded and imprisoned by the U.S. Army at the border. He was widely believed to be involved in the seizure of Mexicali, capital of Baja California, at the beginning of February 1911, by revolutionaries, aided by members of the International Workers of the World, who set up a Socialist Republic of Lower California shortly thereafter, which was then shut down by U.S. troops for violating neutrality laws (*Letters*, 981n.2). The *Chicago Daily Drovers Journal* sported the headline on February 4: "JACK LONDON AN INSURRECTO. Well-Known Author Said to Be at Head of Band of Mexican Rebels." On the same day, the *Phoenix Evening Post* warned, "JACK LONDON AT REBELS' HEAD AROUSES DIAZ, Protests to Washington, Fearing Adventurers Will Flock to Standard, ARIZONA'S GOVERNOR IS ALSO NOTIFIED, Entry of Socialist-Writer Adds New Phase and Quickens Troops' Departure." On February 23 the *Boston Journal* noted, "London lies wounded and captured in the federal camp. Probably that is another government trick. Probably the hope was that as soon as the rebels heard of the great American uplifter's misfortune they would succumb to despair on the spot."[8]

Immediate denials by London, who was in Los Angeles to negotiate film rights, did nothing to quell the wild stories. Quoting Flora London, the *San*

Jose Times printed a correction to the record the day after the inflammatory February 4 Chicago headline appeared: "JACK LONDON IS NOT LEADING A BAND OF INSURRECTIONISTS. Some One is Impersonating the Famous Author. Mother Denies the Story and Says She Received Letter Saying to Expect Him Home on Thursday." Judging from the headlines that convincing maternal assertion had little effect. However, some reporters turned their attention to satirizing London's newsworthiness. For example, the February 10 *San Antonio Light* announced, "'Tex O'Reilly and Jack London, with pencils out and bent on blood can mean nothing short of a frightful carnage. Let Diaz surrender." Other newspapermen took an even more cynical view, as in the February 10 *San Francisco News Letter*: "Poor Mexico has helped to advertise so many litterateurs that one or two more do not matter. . . . Oh, it's a funny world—it could not help be with Jack London and Hearst in it." The February 20 *Boston Transcript* observed that "JACK LONDON, REVOLUTIONIST, [will] provoke the admiring envy of every youth who conceives a successful book as mainly an embodiment of whoop and bluster. . . . Cuba was overrun in the '60s by young men of inferior cleverness and questionable altruism who got in everybody's way in order to accumulate 'material' of which only two or three of them ever had the ability to make use. Every modern combat, whether a tuppenny revolution or a prize fight, summons a swarm of the same kind."[9]

London's 1911 sympathy for the Mexican Revolution is ironic in retrospect, for his seven articles three years later on the actual revolution from Vera Cruz were not what his public was expecting if they thought he really were a "chicken thief and revolutionist." In these articles, though he evinces sympathy for Indian peasants, whom he calls "peons" at the mercy of inept and ruthless leaders, his racialist attacks upon the mestizo (whom he called "mixed-breed") leaders undoes all his socialist intentions toward peons. It is as though he wants it both ways: he is the (socialist) critic of the powerful political class in Mexico, but he is also the (racialist) supporter of American capitalism and imperialism. Since he doesn't really appear to know what his position is, his analysis of racial and other related matters—and even his authorial position itself—is as confused as in *A Daughter of the Snows* or *Adventure*. He voices patently ignorant generalizations about Mexicans: "Like the Eurasians, they possess all the vices of their various commingled bloods and none of the virtues."

Clearly a change occurred in London's racial and political beliefs between 1911 and 1914. As noted earlier, by 1914 London was drinking more heavily, and in Vera Cruz he contracted amoebic dysentery, complicated by pleurisy,

and was hospitalized, adding another site of illness to those that had earlier interfered with his writing. Again he was symbolically thwarted by the "disease" of racial mixing, which he inevitably fell to because he was living in an alien culture and not prevailing. Fear of disease and racial contamination—the same topics that challenged him in the Pacific—indicate that he was still trying to prove himself fully white, hence unassailable, but in fact, as discussed in chapter 7, those years contained a series of events, including the irreversible decline in his health due to his damaged kidneys and aggravated by his drinking and smoking, the loss of another baby, the burning of Wolf House, mounting debts, and legal entanglements. Throughout this book I have noted when London's poor health or emotional state negatively affected his portrayals of race: this was not merely a matter of being in a bad mood and so reverting to racialism or racism. Rather, this careerlong pattern reveals the centrality of London's authorial self-image as a raced white man whole of body and spirit. When this was compromised—particularly by illness—the result is more racialism and even racism. But when London is not focused on himself, when he identifies with Others instead, then he writes his best work. The variety of his writings in his last years suggests a renewed need to experiment with point of view rather than continue to write formula novels like *Adventure* to showcase his (failed) racialism. Though he was very ill at the time of writing *On the Makaloa Mat*, by the summer of 1916 his thinking had fundamentally changed, and his illness and contested self-image no longer seem important. In fact, these stories specifically critique such self-centeredness in personal and cultural terms.

But Mexico was a different story. Resigning from the Socialist Labor Party in 1914, London seemingly accomplished the dual purposes of reinforcing his public whiteness and formally announcing his public distancing from the lower classes and racial "others." But as dramatized in *The Valley of the Moon* and the other Sonoma novels, this decision also reflects a certain wish to withdraw from political and public life. London increasingly saw his mission as less concerned with politics or even writing and more concerned with teaching Americans how to rebuild wasted soils and reclaim the promise of the land, another stance in which self-image is no longer of such importance. If he were still hoping to be a king in his own domain, land equaling health and home, as with the *Snark* voyage here again he left the country to get sick among "mixed breeds," and again he blamed them for his setbacks. In striking contrast, when he returned to Hawai'i in 1915 and even more in 1916, as sick as he was, he

never blamed the Hawaiians for anything, but rather attempted to emulate their healthy lifestyle and delve further into their culture.

The Mexican Revolution of 1910 was the third major upheaval in Mexico since 1810. The first revolution won independence from Spain that brought what London called the "Mexican whites" into power; the second, called the Reforma, placed government in the control of the mestizo class; the last, 1910–14, introduced the Indian peasant as a force to be reckoned with. From 1810 on, the "liberty, equality, and fraternity" of the French Revolution made their mark. As Joan London observes, "time after time the masses, goaded past endurance by suffering and deprivation, followed leaders who raised any semblance of that slogan." In 1877 General Porfirio Díaz brought to an end the long struggle between conservatives and middle-class liberals, and he "proclaim[ed] himself as the 'hero of peace'" and eventually president of Mexico, remaining in office from 1884 until 1911. "Popular government became a farce. Under his rule Mexico drifted more and more toward reaction, and although prosperity came to the country it was not for the oppressed people but for the ruling class and foreign capital," Joan comments.[10]

In 1890 Díaz had appropriated previously inalienable farmlands of the villages, communal fields that stood between millions of Indians and starvation. Less than a thousand powerful landowners owned huge estates as large as six million acres, while ten million Indians, nearly three-fifths of the population, became serfs. Díaz also appropriated mineral rights and petroleum interests, selling them cheaply or giving them away outright to American companies. By 1911 American interests owned virtually all major railways, mining operations, and Mexican oil companies. In 1906 an opposition movement led by Ricardo Flores Magón (1874–1922) challenged the reelection of Díaz, and the same year the first strike in an American-owned mine broke out. With an opposition party rising, U.S. and European capitalists were gravely concerned that with the fall of Díaz's government their investments would be lost. As Joan records, armed "reinforcements" were brought in from Texas, approved by the Mexican government, to take charge until Díaz's *rurales* had "restored order." The next year "textile workers in the Rio Blanco were shot down by government troops when they, too, went on strike for the first time," an incident that appears in "The Mexican."[11] Magón was jailed in the United States. Francisco I. Madero (1873–1913), an Indian and another opponent of Díaz's, forced him to resign in 1911 and led a liberal regime until 1913, championing workers' interests, and now Emiliano Zapata (1879–1919) led the cause

of the peasants. The U.S. government did not trust Madero and supported instead Francisco León de la Barra (1863–1939) to succeed him, but then helped engineer a counterrevolution that placed Victoriano Huerta (1854–1916) in power in 1913.[12] Huerta ordered the assassination of Madero and proclaimed himself provisional president of Mexico, yet soon President Woodrow Wilson refused to recognize him because he had not allowed U.S. investors all that they wanted in Mexico. Zapata, Pancho Villa (1877–1923), and Venustiano Carranza (1859–1920) led a revolt; Huerta resigned on July 14, 1914, and Carranza fought Villa and Zapata for leadership. In 1911, the Zapata Plan of Ayala had called for land reform for the Indians and now it was renewed.[13]

As Joan London rightly emphasizes, during the revolution Mexico presented to the United States "a picture of horror and chaos as, unheralded, name after name of leaders and heroes blazed up in the revolution and vanished." The revolution developed "so swiftly and erratically" that observers could not keep up with it. Americans also failed to understand that "[b]ehind the revolution and driving it on was an outraged people whose activity boiled and seethed within the narrow confines set by a purely local perspective. They not only lacked any semblance of a class consciousness; they were not even aware that they were part of a nation." The Mexican urban working class had barely developed, the middle class remained weak and frightened, and the capitalist class was practically nonexistent "save as agents of foreign capital." By and large the United States "saw nothing but violence, lawlessness, betrayal, intrigue and the criminal destruction of private property. . . . But others saw Mexico's fabulously rich oil wells, and watchfully noting events, bided their time until they might strike effectively and secure them."[14]

By 1914 Huerta had lost so much ground that it would not have taken much to topple him. History obliged. In early April 1914, several American sailors were arrested in Tampico by Huerta's officers, and, though they were quickly released and an apology was made, the senior U.S. military officer demanded a twenty-one-gun salute to the American flag. When Huerta refused, President Wilson, who had been tacitly backing the Constitutionalist opposition to Huerta, sent warships into Mexican waters, and, without waiting for congressional approval, ordered the navy to seize Vera Cruz to prevent arms shipments to Huerta from Europe. The operation escalated to a battle on April 21 and 22, in which nineteen Americans and 126 Mexicans were killed (see *Letters*, 1330n.1). Huerta had hoped that by his insult he would cast the Americans as foreign invaders and Mexicans would rally to him, but his plan backfired.[15]

As Carolyn Johnston remarks, London tried to make sense of "this murky, complex revolution," his position resting on the idea that "the efficient, 'humane' Americans had accepted their white man's burden to uplift the 'inferior' peoples. He praised the skill and efficiency of American army surgeons and applauded the Americans for cleaning up Vera Cruz and introducing an equitable system of justice. He failed to apply a Marxist analysis of the situation. His social Darwinism and racism eclipsed his socialism." If the revolution had, in his mind, truly represented the general interests of the masses, he might have supported it. But in his eyes the revolution had failed, justifying American intervention.[16]

MEXICAN WAR CORRESPONDENCE, *COLLIER'S* MAY–JUNE 1914

The Londons had planned a long trip to Japan in 1914, but on April 15 *Collier's* offered London $1,100 a week plus expenses to cover the American invasion of Vera Cruz. When the magazine agreed to pay for Charmian to accompany him, he took the job. With Yoshimatsu Nakata they left from Oakland on the Owl train for El Paso and Galveston.[17] As in Korea, there was little here of "war" that he could cover. Beyond the initial shelling of the naval academy and various raids and arrests by the Americans, and some skirmishes between the Federals and the Constitutionalists, London had to seek out the "human documents" or details of life during wartime from the streets, the prisons, and the law courts of Vera Cruz. He helped rescue Americans and Constitutionalists from Tampico and participated in some minor raids, but mainly he was writing and photographing people at all levels of society, from prisoners of San Juan de Ulúa prison to Mexican and American generals and politicians.[18] People wanted to read about the firebrand London's daring adventures in Mexico, but instead they got dry economic history and racialist theory, with the occasional "human interest" story, but these really are a far cry from the many "human documents" he sketched in Korea. Worse, at least from the point of view of those who wanted to peg London as sympathetic to the revolution, none of London's articles expressed any real support for it.[19]

London soon met with war correspondent friends from Russo-Japanese War days, Richard Harding Davis, Jimmy Hare, Robert Dunn, and Frederick Palmer. They were entertained on navy ships and at hotel dinners by U.S. military officers, where he enjoyed the benefits of his fame. London's front-page celebrity status, as we have seen before, like his illnesses worked against his

writer's imagination: though he sympathizes with the oppressed Indians in his dispatches, they are marred by grandiose historical and anthropological claims about (his own) whiteness.

Charmian records in her diary that when it was too hot to write in their rooms he would sit in a café and talk to whomever was there, then, bored, would go looking for something else to do, perhaps help Mexicans get refugees out of the country, or, once, join a raid to recover a hidden machine gun. Charmian records going with London to "provost's court" to hear civil and criminal cases. Their most dramatic visit was to San Juan de Ulúa prison. Working with interpreters, London was able to interview and photograph some of Díaz's political prisoners who had been awaiting execution there; those few photographs are his most moving. So different from his "official" point of view as an American, a gringo, and an invader, the photographs illustrate the distance between London as racialist and London as human being and artist—and one who had once been a prisoner.

His first dispatch, "The Red Fame of War" (published 16 May 1914), was written on April 22 in Galveston. "Wars and rumors of war," he opens, on the train heading to Galveston, proposing an ironic and philosophical view of war. His fellow passengers, well-tailored and courteous, talk coolly of war. He says for him war only amounts to "up-to-date machine contrivances and devices for the abrupt and violent introduction of foreign substances into the bodies of their fellow mortals." War is "the same old red game" for the soldiers, but for U.S. investors it is a bull market game: "Where the heart is there the treasure is," he recalls from Matthew's gospel.[20] He describes the youthful excitement of the soldiers, whom he compares to young Japanese recruits in 1904. The Texas soldiers claim that Texas alone could "lick" Mexico, London notes, yet behind them the "graybeards" of Washington directing their movements and calculating their profits (*Reports*, 132–33). This is a promising start, but it is the only dispatch critical of the invasion.

In "With Funston's Men" (publ. 23 May 1914), his second dispatch, London seems to have changed his mind. He warms to the warlike tone and introduces a racial binary between the disorder of the Mexicans and the calm and orderly management of Vera Cruz by Americans. He remarks that Mexican officers "seem to have notions different from ours in the matter of prosecuting war," for General Maas, the Federal commander in Vera Cruz before he retreated, released most of the criminals from local jails. On the other hand, the efficient and technologically advanced U.S. troops seem effortlessly to restore order, set-

ting up police and courts, cleaning up bodies, fixing the ice plant, and repairing vehicles. He boasts that "Our fighting ships are ten and fifteen million-dollar electrical, chemical, and mechanical laboratories, and they are manned by scientists and mechanicians" (*Reports*, 140–41), but this description uncomfortably reminds readers of similar passages in "A Thousand Deaths" and "Goliah," not to mention Twain's *Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court*. As in so many other works, London's Mexican Revolution dispatches display a frequent inability to adhere to a consistent racial line. Despite his anxieties about the "war machine" and sympathies with the Indians, throughout his dispatches he repeatedly draws contrasts between capable Americans and incapable Mexicans, as when he sketches the confrontation of a tall American lieutenant with a short Mexican lieutenant: "The American was—well, American. Little of Mexican or Spanish was in the other. It was patent that he was mostly Indian. Even more of Indian was in the ragged, leather-sandaled soldiers under him. They were short, squat, patient-eyed, long-enduring as the way of the peon has been even in the long centuries preceding Cortez, when Aztec and Toltec enslaved him to burden bearing" (144; evidently London does not think of the Aztecs or Toltecs as "Indian"). Against "our highly equipped, capably led young men," they seem "lowly, oxlike creatures," untrained and without properly trained officers," as they are "descendants of the millions of stupid ones who could not withstand the several hundred ragamuffins of Cortez and who passed stupidly from the harsh slavery of the Montezumas to the no less harsh slavery of the Spaniards and the later Mexicans" (145).

Given the nature of humankind, London argues, war is necessary. This would be the stance he took on World War I, shared by many Americans but criticized by the socialists:

> War is a silly thing for a rational, civilized man to contemplate. To settle matters of right and justice by means of introducing into human bodies foreign substances that tear them to pieces is no less silly than ducking elderly ladies of eccentric behavior to find out whether or not they are witches. But—and there you are—what is the rational man to do when those about him persist in settling matters at issue by violent means? (*Reports*, 145)

The dichotomies between "foreign substances" and "civilized man," and between "the rational man" and "violent means" signal London's unease with the situation. His "Americanness" is intensified, however, when he interviews refugees from the American mines and oil fields rescued by U.S. troops; they

were angry, believing that the (delayed) presence of the American troops was the only way for Americans in Vera Cruz to get a "square deal" (148).

"Mexico's Army and Ours" (publ. 30 May 1914), London's third dispatch, is his longest and the one most focused on abstract racial differences between Americans and Mexicans instead of what was transpiring around him. Its level of abstraction and race theory suggests that not much *was* happening, not good for a war correspondent and adventurer/writer. He imagines what things would be like were Vera Cruz populated by Americans and in the possession of a Mexican army:

> First of all our *jefe politico*, or mayor, would have been taken out and shot against a wall. Against walls all over the city our soldiers and civilians would have been lined up and shot. Our jails would have been emptied of criminals, who would be made soldiers and looters. No American's life would be safe, especially if he were known to possess any money. Law . . . would have ceased. So would all business have ceased. He who possessed food would hide it, and there would be hungry women and children. (*Reports*, 152)

The notion of the United States being successfully conquered and terrorized by poverty-stricken Mexico, even having to hide food from them, is almost ludicrous enough to contain a germ of truth—that truth being white Americans' fears of the overwhelming needs of its southern neighbor; in racialist discourse there is always a fear of being "overrun" by non-Anglo-Saxon "races." But the Americans in Vera Cruz, according to London, have behaved exactly as ethically driven Anglo-Saxons: "To the amazement of the Mexicans, there was no general slaughter against blank walls. Instead of turning the prisoners loose, their numbers were added to." Unlike the Mexican soldiers, when the U.S. troops take something from civilians, they pay for it: "Never in their lives had their property been so safe and so profitable." And "the diseases that stalk at the heels of war did not stalk. On the contrary, Vera Cruz was cleaned and disinfected as it had never been in all its history" (153). London begins in this dispatch to turn more frequently to the theme of health and cleanliness versus disease and decay.

London then ponders what will preoccupy him for most of this dispatch, an odd blend of genuine sympathy for the oppressed Indians of Mexico and racialist abstractions such as the fear of "mongrels":

> Changes of government mean to the peon merely changes of the everlasting master. His harsh treatment and poorly rewarded toil are ever the same, un-

> changing as the sun and seasons. He has little to lose and less to gain. He is born to an unlovely place in life. It is the will of God, the law of existence.
>
> With rare exceptions he does not dream that there may be a social order wherein can be no masters of the sort he knows. (*Reports*, 154–55)

This is certainly a sympathetic and not necessarily inaccurate insight, given the miseries of Mexico's Indians under dictators like Huerta, but it reflects the denial of social development to the static Indians, signaled by the use of the singular pronoun "he" to denote an entire race of people; what follows a "he" are inevitably pseudoscientific racialist theories and the loss of the sense of individuals. No matter how much sympathy for "peons" London may have, it is overshadowed by that reductive racialism:

> If a breeder should stock his farm with the swiftest race horses obtainable, and employ a method of selection whereby only the slowest and clumsiest horses were bred, it would not be many generations before he would have a breed of very slow and very clumsy horses. . . . Now this is just the sort of selection that has been applied to the peon for many centuries. Whenever a peon of dream and passion and vision and spirit was born he was eliminated. His masters wanted lowly, docile, stupid slaves, and resented such a variation. (*Reports*, 155–56)

This Spencerian observation, again, not without some truth to it, is followed by the thin socialist hope that for "future generations a social selection that will put a premium of living on dream and passion and vision and spirit will develop an entirely different type of peon" (155–56); London fails to explain how this future will come about.

As though he is in some sort of internal ideological war, the moment he hands the "peons" a measure of understanding by explaining the historical injustices that have led to their status and even envisions a socialist future for them, London then snatches it away. The passage below shows real insight:

> A peon seeks to gladden his existence by drinking a few cents' worth of half-spoiled pulque. The maggots of intoxication begin to crawl in his brain, and he is happy in that for a space he has forgotten in God knows what dim drunken imaginings. Then the long arm of his ruler reaches out through the medium of many minions, and the peon, sober with an aching head, finds himself in jail waiting the next draft to the army. . . .
>
> He does not know whom he fights for, for what, or why. He accepts it as the system of life. It is a very sad world, but it is the only world he knows. This is

> why, . . . in the midst of battle or afterward, he so frequently changes sides. He is not fighting for any principle, for any reward. It is a sad world, in which witless, humble men are just forced to fight, to kill, and to be killed. The merits of either banner are equal, or, rather, so far as he is concerned, there are no merits to either banner. (*Reports*, 157)

Similarly, in a scene that recalls London's vision of a dead Russian's leg protruding from the back of a cart in Korea, he tells how "I saw the leg of a peon soldier amputated. It was a perfectly good leg, all except for a few inches of bone near the thigh which had been shattered to countless fragments by a wobbling, high-velocity American bullet. And as I gazed at that leg, limp yet with life, being carried out of the operating room, and realized that this was what men did to men in the twentieth century after Christ, I found myself in accord of sentiment with the peon." Yet London's "sympathy" easily dissolves into abstraction:

> It is a sad world wherein the millions of the stupid lowly are compelled to toil and moil at the making of all manner of commodities that can be and are on occasion destroyed in an instant by the hot breath of war. I have just come back from the vast Cuartel, or Barracks, of Vera Cruz. Such a destruction of the labor of men! Bales upon bales and mountains of bales of clothing, of uniforms of wool, of linen, of cotton, disrupted, torn to pieces, scattered about, . . . hats, caps, shirts, modern leather shoes and rude sandals. . . . I agree with the peon: It is a sad world. It is also a funny world. (*Reports*, 157–58)

The "funny world" is symbolized by the destroyed mounds of goods is an emblem of the absurdity of war, but London moves too easily from the desperation of the peons to the irony he perceives in the destruction of the little they have. But more troubling is that, like his fellow Americans, his gaze also shifts from the sufferings of Mexico to its commercial possibilities:

> The Mexican peon residing in the United States at the present time—and there are many thousands of him—is far better treated than are his brothers south of the border. . . . Why not toss the old drugs overboard and consider the matter clear-eyed? [A] civilization introduced by America and Europe is being destroyed by the madness of a handful of rulers who do not know how to rule. . . . The big brother can police, organize, and manage Mexico. The so-called leaders of Mexico cannot. And the lives and happiness of a few million peons, as well as of many millions yet to be born, are at stake. (*Reports*, 159–160)

At this juncture, the more London sympathizes with the "peons," the more he colonizes them; the more he attacks their leaders, the more this loses its moral force because of his stated reason for their failure: their mixed blood. London's racialism once again stood directly in the way of logical analysis of Mexico's situation, which, minus the attacks on "breeds" and "mongrels," is actually one of the better ones published in the U.S. press of the day.

"Stalking the Pestilence" (publ. 6 June 1914) reintroduces the trope of diseased Others, describing an outbreak of meningitis among Constitutionalist prisoners sent south and kept moving because of buck-passing by their keepers, and a typhoid fever epidemic in Vera Cruz, both treated by U.S. Army and Navy surgeons. He details the wounds and surgeries he observes but seems to be running out of things to report. And so, without anything specific to focus upon, he returns for the remaining dispatches to racialism, beginning with "The Trouble Makers of Mexico" (publ. 13 June 1914). He at first, as later in "The Language of the Tribe," interestingly compares the situation in Mexico with other misunderstandings within and among nations, but again undermines his serious observations with racist stereotypes:

> The commonest, as well as the gravest, mistake in human intercourse is that very human weakness of creating all other individuals in one's own image. . . . The East does not understand California to-day in her attitude toward the Japanese question. . . . The East recreates California in her own image. Since such mistakes of understanding are common among groups of peoples of the same breed and country, it is patent that deeper and more disastrous mistakes may be made among people of different races dwelling in different countries. The chief cause of our misunderstanding to-day of the Mexicans is that we have tried to create them in our own American image. (*Reports*, 173)

Right up until the last line one feels London is just, but the imposition of American "ability" upon Mexican "inability" undoes him. If he sees Mexico is a "torn and devastated country" in which "twelve million peons, and all native and foreign business men [are being] injured and destroyed by the silly and selfish conduct of a few mixed breeds," the mention of millions of starving peasants in the same sentence with "foreign business men" and their injuries makes any "sympathy" for the Indians a moot point. If he discerns a tragic dimension to the revolution when he sees "a great, rich country, capable of supporting in happiness a hundred million souls, being smashed to chaos by a handful of child-minded men playing with the tragic tools of death made possible by modern mechanics and

chemistry" (*Reports*, 174), the theme of U.S. (white) technological superiority as the factor that will rightly carry the day against the mestizo leaders echoes his earliest racialist theories about the white man's secret weapon of technology. Even though he suspected that Japanese technology would one day rival that of the United States and Britain, here he could praise the U.S. technology that overpowered Mexico. He gets more specific about the problem technology and American know-how need to confront: the "half-breed class" leading Mexico, which represents "neither the great working class, nor the property-owning class, nor the picked men of the United States and Europe who have given Mexico what measure of exotic civilization it possesses." They (not U.S. capitalists) are the "predatory class." Unlike other members of society "they produce nothing. They create nothing. They aim to possess a shirt, ride on a horse, and 'shake down' the people who work and the people who develop" (176–77).

In "Lawgivers" (publ. 20 June 1914) the reader encounters with relief realistic scenes set in the Vera Cruz courtroom. There are convincing and moving character sketches, comic details, and careful use of individual proper names and personal situations of the Mexicans who enter the court. Here London's racialism is subordinate to his interesting and believable "human documents" of people and their individual cases, though he undercuts their strength by praising the U.S. judge, who alone is able to render impartial justice: "White-skinned armed men with an inherited genius for government are needed and have been for four centuries since the Indian empires and their systems of law collapsed" (*Reports*, 184). Again the contradictions confuse his reader: does he mean that the Indians of the past had a workable system of law and that it was undone by the (European) Spaniards? What use is it to complain of Indian blood infused with white, when the Indian would not seem to "need" it, with an indigenous Indian law? Also, what need for the "peon" to "evolve" at all?

London's last dispatch, "Our Adventure in Tampico" (publ. 27 June 1914), describes a naval trip to the Tampico and Pánuco oil fields to rescue U.S. workers. London photographed wrecked oil company property, boats, docks, tanks, and the railroad. This gave rise not to more of his opening meditations upon the wastefulness of war but instead of the tremendous advances of oil drilling by Americans and the vast wealth produced (*Reports*, 197). The most interesting section of this dispatch turns from discussion of American business interests to describe some of the Constitutionalists and "*soldaderas*," or female camp followers, the *soldaderas* with their "wicked" expressions and arms to back them up. And it is an Indian who actually operates the oil drilling and shipments:

> When the Americans were driven out, this Indian, without instructions, threatened by the soldiers, had stuck to his post and moved the flowing oil from wells to tanks and to the emergency reservoirs. Nor had a barrel of oil been lost. Yet three times the Federals had strung him up by the neck in an effort to persuade him to volunteer in the army. As he told them, and he is legion:
>
> "I don't want to fight. I have trouble with nobody. I don't want trouble. When I first came to work here for the gringos I had nothing. I went barefooted. Now I wear shoes. When I worked I got sixty centavos a day. Now I get four pesos a day. I have a nice house. There are chairs in my house. I have a talking machine. Before I lived like a dog. No, I won't be a soldier and fight. All I want is to be left alone." (*Reports*, 203–04)

This speech reads like a statement of gratitude to the gringos, which would have been as popular with U.S. readers as London's growing admiration for American business abroad. But this Mexican also has his own point of view, wanting to be left alone and wanting to prosper, and most importantly, he is the one who is competent and in charge when the Americans require "rescue." Instead of magnifying this image, London instead moves to another half-hearted salute to the brains and bravery of U.S. oil men in saving their refugees and fixing their tanks. No wonder his socialist friends were angry at him.

As though ultimately bored with it all, London ends with the image of himself asleep in his chair, while he imagines that "chiefs" of the world work on problems worse than the ones in Mexico. Headed home, he is neither "chicken thief" nor "chief" but just a drowsy onlooker:

> One last thing I must give. Over the telephone came the verification of the earlier report of fighting. The 3,400 Federals had pretty well cut to pieces the 500 rebels, who were dropping back. Also, the Federals had ceased drifting and were making fast time for the mountains. And in the evening I fell asleep in my chair while the telephone rang on and on. (*Reports*, 210)

There is another reason London is dozing in his chair. According to Charmian's diary of June 3, London fell ill with acute bacillary dysentery, necessitating their return home, his "race adventure" cut short by the practical realities of his body.[21] Arriving in Glen Ellen on June 18, 1914, they were met by his personal physician, Dr. William S. Porter. London had wanted, according to a May 27 telegram to *Collier's*, to stay several more weeks in Mexico and even go on a tour of the countryside if there were "something big breaking."[22]

Joan London was later scandalized by London's siding with U.S. corporate oil interests. For her, his articles for *Collier's* "reveal such a complete *volte face* in his attitude toward the Mexican revolution and America's role in it that one is almost tempted to believe that they were written under his name by an entirely different person." She laments,

> Jack's reactions to the inhabitants of a foreign country were those of a provincial, middle-class American. All that he had learned from Marx and Engels, his many times reiterated belief in the international revolutionary movement, the solidarity he had expressed so often with the struggle of workers against their oppressors, succumbed to the race prejudice and glorification of the Anglo-Saxon of Benjamin Kidd, and to the "big-brother" propaganda with which American imperialism masked its self-interest.[23]

Even the mildly liberal *Nation* remarked, "The extremely readable letters from Mexico in *Collier's* are not written by the 'Yours for the Revolution Jack London' but by plain 'Jack London.'. . . That an eminent apostle of red revolution should be audibly licking his chops over millions of gold dollars wrested from its rightful owner, the Mexican peon, is somewhat disconcerting." In the *Appeal to Reason* John Kenneth Turner, also recently returned from Tampico, put it this way: "[The oil interests] hoped to win me to their cherished theory that God created Mexico not for the Mexicans, but for the American and English oil men." He was particularly annoyed with London since he knew he had read his book, *Barbarous Mexico* (1911): "Socialist London turned out a brief for the oil man, a brief for intervention, a brief for what Mexicans call 'Yankee imperialism.' What influences other than flattering good fellowship may have been exerted to bring about this remarkable result, in the particular case of Jack London, I do not know." Turner, like Joan, believed London guilty of a "tragic sellout."[24]

Two years later, from Honolulu on March 7, 1916, London wrote his letter of resignation to the Socialist Party local in Glen Ellen. At this time the Socialist Party of America was being taken over by Eugene V. Debs, with the more conservative Daniel DeLeon running the Socialist Labor Party. London was correct that the Socialist Labor Party was not the militant party of the left he had believed it was, but one also wonders why he didn't join up with Debs or with the even more radical IWW, which drew criticism from DeLeon and the AFL led by Samuel Gompers, or be, like Leon Trotsky, a politically defined man of letters and of action.[25] The letter reads: "I am resigning from the Socialist

Party because of its lack of fire and fight, and its loss of emphasis upon the class struggle. I was originally a member of the old, revolutionary up-on-its-hind-legs, fighting, Socialist Labor Party. . . . Trained in the class struggle, as taught and practiced by the Socialist Labor Party, my own highest judgment concurring, I believed that the working class, by fighting, by never fusing, by never making terms with the enemy, could emancipate itself." London cannot sanction the party of "peaceableness and compromise." He concludes,

> My final word is that liberty, freedom, and independence are royal things that cannot be presented to, nor thrust upon, races and classes. If races and classes cannot rise up and by their own strength of brain and brawn wrest from the world liberty, freedom, and independence, they never, in time, can come to these royal possessions—and if such royal things are kindly presented to them by superior individuals, on silver platters, they will know not what to do with them, will fail to make use of them, and will be what they have always been in the past—inferior races and inferior classes. (*Letters*, 1537–38)

Biographers and critics find this letter puzzling, for it does not state outright London's reasons for resigning. The answer may lie in his contrast of "races and classes" who wish to move up to "royal things . . . presented to them by superior individuals." Stung by criticism of his stance on the Mexican Revolution and World War I, perhaps London wanted to locate socialists among the "inferior races and inferior classes." This had to be a low point for him, but he was about to experience a reevaluation of his view of humanity, of all "races and classes," during his last stay in Hawai'i. This last artistic transformation showed that it was not the socialists who needed to change, but London. This brings us to his last stories from 1916, included in the collections *The Red One* (1918) and *On the Makaloa Mat* (1919), where he looks inward to psychological and racial issues long at work in his psyche—and revisits two of his most significant racial "houses." As discussed in chapter 4, in "The Red One" he returns to the island of Guadalcanal in a revision of himself in the character of Bassett, who dies a sacrifice to his own quest for knowledge.

The stories of *On the Makaloa Mat* were conceived and mostly written during the last sojourn in Hawai'i, from December 22, 1915, to July 26, 1916. As discussed in chapter 4, reading Jung meshed with London's renewed interest in Polynesian mythology. He was able to embrace a new understanding of the spiritual, the irrational, as adaptive, evolutionary mechanisms at odds with "civilized" or "rational" consciousness privileged in Western imperialist dis-

courses. Of course there is a moral trap in equating nonwhite Pacific peoples or any other peoples with the "primitive" or "irrational," and it is widely recognized that Jung followed in many respects the general line of German race theory—especially the legends of dying sun gods—which promoted "Aryan" identity. However, Jung labored to expand the world "mythology" beyond Western or European mythologies to encompass world mythology (in line with the development of comparative anthropology at the turn of the century), with examples of symbols and archetypes from as much of the world as he had access to, including non-Western mythologies and cultures. If Jung's archetypes and a collective unconscious were to be taken seriously, he had to include more than just a small sampling of humanity. In academic discourse today most critics are not comfortable with the idea of any "universals," especially regarding race, but in London's day Jung was seen as racially progressive and liberalizing. And, as we have seen, toward the end of his life London was in great need of renewal, especially within the problem of identity within race. In Jack London's case, the tempting invitation to see a great figure's life ending with an epiphany is realized.

REBIRTH IN "THE WATER BABY"

In "The Water Baby," completed October 4, 1916, London returns to the figure of the racial trickster. Like "The Red One," this is the story of a dying man in what A. Grove Day calls "a Jungian parable."[26] "The Water Baby" is a story about knowledge, about the kind of knowledge worth having, and it questions all of London's previous beliefs in knowledge systems that failed to fulfill his longings for peace and security in his evolving identities as man, artist, and human being. It is less a contest between white and Hawaiian ways of knowing than an admission that such opposed epistemologies can be explored from a broader perspective. At the end the reader recognizes how John Lakana's worldview has been tested and bested, but does not know whether Lakana's mind has been changed, a stimulating ambiguity.

In late June 1916 when London read Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious*, he found new perspectives on the dying and resurrected god, whether Jesus or an ancient sun god, and arguments for the positive function of religious or spiritual belief. Evidently an important passage was Jung's allusion to the story of Jesus and Nicodemus, which London had marked in his copy of Jung's books and read at least from the time of the *Snark*:

> [Nicodemus] came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.
>
> Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.
>
> Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?
>
> Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
>
> That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
>
> Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.
>
> The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit. (John 3:2–8)

London also underscored Jung's interpretation, "Think not carnally or thou are carnal, but think symbolically, then thou art spirit."[27] Religious myth, London read, gives human beings "assurance and strength, so that [they] may not be overwhelmed by the monsters of the universe." The symbols of religion may be misleading, but religion is "*psychologically true*, because it was and is the bridge to all the greatest achievements of humanity."[28] As an artist who had always relied on myth—first from Homer and Milton in the Klondike work, then on the Bible in the South Seas tales—London responded enthusiastically to Jung's search for individuation not through conscious striving but through embrace of the unconscious or spirit via the medium of the archetype, embracing the "collective unconscious" as a frame for the search for the integration of the individual soul. He was struck by Jung's connections between a hidden past or "race" memory and the evolution of the individual, and also by the role of the Mother in the unconscious.

London repeatedly marked paragraphs concerning the need to escape infantilism and the pull of the "subterranean" mother. Reflecting his own family drama of interchangeable mothers and fathers, London underscored Jung's passage, "When one has slain the father, one can obtain possession of his wife, and when one has conquered the mother, one can free one's self." "The Red One" and "The Water Baby" certainly redefine the all-important role of Jung's archetype of the Great Mother. For Jung, art is uniquely suited to ex-

press the modern individual's search for a soul, for it "always contain[s] the same old problems of humanity, which rise again and again in new symbolic disguise from the shadowy world of the unconscious, ... deliverance from the mother, who is the continuous and inexhaustible source of life for the creator, but death for the cowardly, timid and sluggish."[29] Jung warns that "If the libido remains arrested in the wonder kingdom of the inner world, then the man has become for the world above a phantom, then he is practically dead or desperately ill."[30] If the self is not able to overcome the environmental challenges he faces, he finds himself estranged in gradually deeper immersion "into the maternal abyss."[31] In this sense, Jung echoed Darwin on the subject of survival. As in *Before Adam* and several short stories, London's "abysmal brute" could be an unconscious source of self-affirmation. As Jung says, "we have dug down into the historic depths of the soul, and in doing this we have uncovered an old buried idol, the youthful, beautiful, fire-encircled and halo-crowned sun-hero, who, forever unattainable to the mortal, wanders upon the earth, causing night to follow day; winter, summer; death, life; and who returns again in rejuvenated splendor and gives light to new generations." Whoever renounces the chance to experience contact with this unconscious self "commits a sort of self-murder."[32]

In translator and editor Beatrice Hinkle's introduction, London underscored passages of how repressed, unacknowledged feelings comprise the developing "hidden psyche," recalling his comments to Mabel Applegarth, Anna Strunsky Walling, and others that no one could know his inner self. He jotted marginal notes on repression as "the often quite unbearable conflict of [a man's] weaknesses with his feelings of idealism," and marked this passage: "Those who have been able to recognize their own weaknesses and have suffered in the privacy of their own souls, the knowledge that these things have not set them apart from others, but that they are the common property of all and that no one can point the finger of scorn at his fellow, is one of the greatest experiences of life and is productive of the greatest relief."[33] Charmian saw "The Water Baby" as a Jungian model of the mind "subtly presented through the medium of Hawaiian mythology, . . . clearly a symbolic representation of the Rebirth, the return of the Mother."[34]

Jung gives special attention to the racial stereotypes of his day:

> I have frequently observed in the analysis of Americans that certain unconscious complexes, i.e. repressed sexuality, are represented by the symbol of the Negro

> or an Indian; for example, when a European tells in his dream, "Then came a ragged, dirty individual," for Americans and for those who live in the tropics it is a Negro. When with Europeans it is a vagabond or a criminal, with Americans it is a Negro or an Indian which represents the individual's own repressed sexual personality, and the one considered inferior.[35]

This observation seems uniquely fitted to understanding London's conflicts at this time. Individualism, socialism, racialism, even what he thought was manhood: none was ultimately fulfilling. In contrast, the concept of individuation within community challenged London's set notions of identity. No wonder he told Charmian he had entered a new world. He was reading words on a page written by another person that perfectly described the mystery, in excruciating detail, of his own search as if using his own words: to find individuality, one must start with what is shared, not what is unique. Charmian records London's great discovery: "'I tell you I am standing on the edge of a world so new, so terrible, so wonderful, that I am almost afraid to look over into it.'" He also told her, "'For the first time in my life, I see the value of the confessional.'"[36]

"The Water Baby" was finished just after "Like Argus of the Ancient Times" and "When Alice Told Her Soul"—all three, in a sense, are confessional stories. Planning a trip to New York but increasingly ill and exhausted by lawsuits over water rights on the ranch and film rights to his books, he returned to the ranch at the beginning of August 1916 from a last long visit to Hawai'i. In writing this final story London as author symbolically retreats at the wisdom of the Other, as the white man John Lakana's world-weary tone gives way to the old Hawaiian fisherman Kohokumu's hoarse chanting, as though in the end, to have a chance to find himself, the narrator has to relinquish the most precious piece of his identity, his own voice. Weighted with conventional consciousness, and conscious that such knowledge is not enough, Lakana loses control of his narration of the story to Kohokumu. Lakana fishes for his unconscious as the scientist Bassett hunted for his in "The Red One." As Bassett respected Ngurn, unless Lakana is beaten by the validity of Kohokumu's kind of knowledge, he may remain intellectually, physically, and emotionally sterile, like Pathurst of *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore.

The author steps through the fictive mask in this story as a *haole kama'āina* named Lakana who goes fishing one day with old Kohokumu. The names are significant: as we've already seen, Lakana was London's Hawaiian name; and *Kohokumu* means "tree of knowledge" in Hawaiian. Weighted with self-

consciousness and burdened by illness, Lakana loses patience with Kohokumu's chanting of the deeds of Maui and his stories. One of the primary myths of Maui is that he snared the sun, which has a symbolic presence in London's work from the Klondike stories on.[37] But here the sun is not the dominant force. Kohokumu tells how Maui caught the sun to slow it down so that his mother's *tapa* cloth could dry, how he "fished up dry land from ocean depths with hooks made fast to heaven."[38] Lakana compares Maui to Prometheus, but unlike Prometheus, who stole from heaven, Maui steals from the depths of the maternal sea: "Caught is the land beneath the water, / Floated up, up to the surface" (*Stories*, 2486). Lakana holds his head and moans: "My head ached. The sun glare on the water made my eyes ache, while I was suffering more than half a touch of mal de mer." He drifts off into a half-slumber, but is startled awake "to the stab of the sun" when Kohokumu shouts, "'Its a big one,'" having caught a huge squid. He places "his lean, hawklike face into the very center of the slimy, squirming mass, and with his several ancient fangs bit into the heart and life of the matter" (2486). The passage shows the relativity of the sea and the sun, the male and the female, each with an archetypal role to play in Kohokumu's identity.

Lakana's surmise that Kohokumu's beliefs are only "a queer religion" is met with Kohokumu's eloquent retort:

> "When I was young I muddled my head over queerer religions," old Kohokumu retorted. "But listen, O Young Wise One, to my elderly wisdom. This I know: as I grow old I seek less for the truth from without me, and find more of the truth from within me. Why have I thought this thought of my return to my mother and of my rebirth from my mother into the sun? You do not know. I do not know, save that, without whisper of man's voice or printed word, without prompting from otherwhere, this thought has arisen from within me, from the deeps of me that are as deep as the sea. I am not a god. I do not make things. Therefore I have not made this thought. I do not know its father or its mother. It is of old time before me, and therefore it is true. Man does not make truth. Man, if he be not blind, only recognizes truth when he sees it. Is this thought that I have thought a dream?" (*Stories*, 2488–89)

Kohokumu is willing to give over his identity to a collectivity and to change shapes like the trickster Maui, as at the same time he evolves greater self-understanding and, he believes, an ultimate identity. He tells of a dream in which he is a lark, flying toward the sun, "'singing, singing, as old Kohokumu

never sang.'" Kohokumu wonders if his dream is real and whether he and Lakana are merely part of a dream Maui is having (2489). Then, within this frame of questioning the sources of his identity, he begins to tell the tale of Keikiwai, the Water Baby, a trickster who uses his knowledge of the language and ways of sharks to trick the sharks guarding the bay where the lobsters are and retrieve lobsters for his father the chief. To get the sharks out of the way so he can get a lobster, he throws a stone into the water instead of jumping in. When the sharks rush to attack, he tells them that the one with the shortest tail is his friend and has betrayed the rest. He repeats this charm, a trick of evidence for which there is no dispute—one shark will always have the shortest tail—but in which there is no truth. The one with the shortest tail is there to blame, and blamed he is, until the forty sharks are gone, the last having burst from eating the thirty-nine others. The bursting shark with its "proof" is a brilliant symbol of the futility of relying only on the surface facts of life and not their deeper meanings.

Lakana loses control of the narrative when Kohokumu forces him to hear out the story of the Water Baby, and Lakana's last word in the story is his interjected "But—", to which Kohokumu pays no attention, completing the Keikiwai story. The reader does not finally know what, if anything, Lakana has learned:

> "Hold, O Lakana!" he checked the speech that rushed to my tongue. "I know what next you would say. You would say that with my own eyes I did not see this, and therefore that I do not know what have been telling you. But I do know, and I can prove it. My father's father knew the grandson of the Water Baby's father's uncle. Also, there, on the rocky point to which I point my finger now, is where the Water Baby stood and dived. I have dived for lobsters there myself. It is a great place for lobsters. Also, and often, have I seen sharks there. And there, on the bottom, as I should know, for I have seen and counted them, are the thirty-nine lava rocks thrown in by the Water Baby as I have described."
>
> "But—" I began. . . .
>
> "Of course I know. The thirty-nine lava rocks are still there. You can count them any day for yourself. Of course I know, and I know for a fact." (*Stories*, 2493)

Kohokumu's trick of using empirical knowledge to prove his story even when the story itself defeats all such designs has silenced Lakana, for after that, who is to say what is true and what is not? Two kinds of knowledge—conscious and unconscious, "factual" and mythic—are shown as relative in Kohokumu's

tale.[39] As Loudermilk observes, Kohokumu is Lakana's superior in the story not merely because he is Hawaiian and can trace his genealogy; rather "he is closer to London's supraracial ideal of the Hawaiian." London's "epistemological play" in this story "reveals a new preoccupation with much larger, more universal" concerns than race: "In this, as in all the Jungian stories, London looks for something more real and universal than race as a basis for identity or knowledge."[40] As the Water Baby's secret power is language, the story is almost all dialogue and debate.[41] Though Kohokumu is the master and Lakana the student (Kohokumu also the doctor and Lakana the patient), Lakana resists true dialogue because he does not admit that Kohokumu's categories are not reducible to his, an attitude reminiscent of the linguistic miscommunications in "The Chinago." For example, he tries to place Maui in terms of modern labor unions. In contrast Kohokumu argues that we can only tell stories of Maui, not "prove" him, because people do not make the facts and cannot determine whether they are true or not.

Such relativity is also evident in the story's reliance upon Polynesian myths, reflecting London's embrace of alternate understandings of humankind, and helping one appreciate the tale's unique and multilayered sets of discourses. Maui is the great trickster hero of the South Pacific. He was of impure birth, formed by a clot of blood from his mother's loincloth. He was abandoned by his own kind and raised by gods who taught him their secrets, which he soon used to defy them and begin a career of adventures in which he pulls up the earth, raises the sky, and catches the sun in a trap to lengthen the day. He steals fire and breaks other taboos. As Laura Makarius emphasizes, Maui possesses an exceptional share of *mana*, or life force, and the ability to make use of it to alter the existing order of the world.[42] Before Maui raised the sky to its present height, it sat only a few feet from the surface of the earth, and earth's denizens were creatures with webbed, jointless limbs, virtually immobile, mere blobs of matter. They became human beings when they were able to stand upright. Katherine Luomala thus sees Maui as representation of "the human race in its conflict between its conventions and its ambitions," a formulation that could also be applied to London's racial selves in "The Water Baby."[43]

At the turn of the twentieth century writers and historians showed growing interest in the mythology, traditions, and culture of Hawai'i, as evidenced by the popularity of such books as Nathaniel B. Emerson's *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii*, published by the Bureau of American Ethnology at the Smithsonian Institution in 1909 (when for the first time Native peoples other than

American Indians were included in the bureau's research). A few years earlier Emerson translated David Malo's *Hawaiian Antiquities* (1898). Also widely read were Thomas G. Thrum's *Hawaiian Folktales* (1907) and various works by W. D. Westervelt.[44] Jane Murphy Romjue believes London was familiar with these books.[45]

Certainly *On the Makaloa Mat* focuses much more on the culture and traditions of the native Hawaiian characters than *The House of Pride*, whose title refers to the houses built by *haoles* and not Hawaiians. Especially in "The Bones of Kahekili" and "Shin Bones" *On the Makaloa Mat* is grounded in precontact Hawaiian beliefs and casts key characters as Hawaiians. However, Romjue emphasizes, "only in 'The Water Baby' does London write his own truly Hawaiian tale. Here he includes lines from chants and specific allusions to key Hawaiian myths and characters, incorporates the structure of the *hoʻopaʻapaʻa* (riddling contest) and makes traditional Hawaiian religious beliefs, such as the legend of the *aumakua*, an integral part of the action."[46] Romjue identifies four separate traditional Hawaiian chants in "The Water Baby." First there is an excerpt, as Kohokumu mentions, from "'Queen Liliuokalani's own family *mele*'" (*Stories*, 2484), a reference to the exiled queen's 1897 translation of the Hawaiian creation chant:

> "Maui became restless and fought the sun
> With a noose that he laid.
> And winter won the sun,
> And summer was won by Maui." (*Stories*, 2484)

This chant was important in establishing the queen's royal heritage as she faced her humiliating dethronement, and it is reflected in Kohokumu's claims of genealogy and the nature of truth, claiming he is related to Keikiwai (genealogy was extremely important to Hawaiians and made up the content of most of their chants). The second chant is from the "Chant of Kualiʻi," which also praises Maui and traces his genealogy. As Romjue notes, London links "the heroes and events of the past to those of the present, validates the truth of the past even in the face of new scientific discoveries, and affirms the validity of the stories of the 'primitive' types of people to the 'civilized,' educated, modern people. The third chant is the second part of a chant called the "*Pule Heʻe*," used by the *kahuna* (priests) for the healing of the sick, a ritual involving the sacrifice of a "*heʻe*" or squid. The fourth chant invokes the god Lono, revered as the god of healing by the Hawaiians. Lono is also the master of the riddling

contest.[47] In "The Water Baby" the riddler structure is in place from the beginning, with Lakana's "attempt at one-upmanship" reflected in his framing of Hawaiian myths within Western ones, yet as Romjue notes, from the beginning "he seems clearly bested here by the simplicity and directness of older, apparently wiser Kohokumu." "'And what could I reply?,'" Lakana complains; "'He had me on the matter of reasonableness'" (*Stories*, 2485). As she emphasizes, "Many parts of Kohokumu and Lakana's conversation illustrate the typical riddler's ability to follow exactly the words of his opponent, which he must show to apply equally well to the parallel he has chosen." For example, Kohokumu throws back at Lakana the notion of a "wreck" when Lakana teases him about his behavior at the funeral the night before. Kohokumu's victory in the *hoʻopaʻapaʻa* is unexpected: "the Hawaiian riddling contests frequently end with a young, clever lad outwitting the seemingly older, wiser opponent."[48]

London also uses two other Hawaiian myths, Romjue notes: "The Legend of Aiai," which parallels many of the details of the fishing trip, and the Hawaiian legend of Punia. Aiai inherited four magic objects with which he could control the fish when the fish god died: "a decoy stick, a cowry, and hook, and a stone which had the power to lure fish," and especially a giant octopus. Keikiwai, the Water Baby, is a version of the Punia trickster, a strong child who by ten years old, like Hermes had the strength of a man. The shark chief comes to where his father fishes and with his ten loyal sharks begins to kill and eat his father and others. Punia uses his wits to avenge his father, luring the sharks into the bay by throwing rocks in the water they mistake for Punia. One by one he turns them against one another.[49] What makes *On the Makaloa Mat* in general and "The Water Baby" in particular so significant in London's fiction is precisely located in the attempt to narrate from within the "other" culture by having its characters speak for themselves, rely upon traditional myths, *and* best the white man. It is as though Chief Thling-Tinneh from "The Son of the Wolf" countered MacKenzie's bid for his daughter with a riddling match, and won.

Jung's influence on this story has been recognized by several London biographers and critics. Richard O'Connor sees it as evidence that London found a new approach that would "vitalize his work" and give his life a new "more significant direction" in Jung, an understanding that could change humanity's way of "thinking about itself, its purposes and its destiny."[50] Day sees its significance in how "the ponderings even of a lowly old Polynesian may have meanings still to be discovered by the psychologists."[51] McClintock focuses on

the sun hero myth as expressed in "The Water Baby."[52] If the Klondike of "To Build a Fire" and works such as *Martin Eden* represent a hero's perilous night journey that ends in failure, then "The Water Baby" celebrates a return to the water and rebirth. For Earle Labor, London's search for meaning in the face of an increasingly materialistic modern world in this story draws from both nineteenth-century Nature symbolism and looks forward to the emptiness of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1925), an emptiness Eliot also sought to counter by returning to ancient mythologies: London discovered the key "to the 'lost-ness' of modern man" and was the first "American fictionist deliberately to synchronize his stories with Jung's theory of racial memory."[53] Labor sees in London's last stories a metamorphosis: "London the popular writer and hardcore materialist is becoming Jack London the deliberate mythmaker and spiritual philosopher." The twin influences of Jung and Hawai'i caused his work to undergo a "'sea-change.'"[54] Elsewhere he remarks, "In the tradition that included James Fenimore Cooper before him and William Faulkner after him, London was acutely sensitive to the tragic consequences of the white man's inevitable civilization and corruption of the wilderness."[55]

JACK LONDON'S LITERARY LEGACY

Thus Hawai'i furnished London's last months with a new and an old home wherein he could confront his most passionate inner and artistic necessities and continue to do what he had done so long, give the world new portraits of its unpredictable characters, of the burgeoning variety of peoples and points of view who would make up the population of the modern global world. In his last stories he seems to have found the truism that travel always about the self to be truer than ever. His famous credo demanded the drive to move and develop in every possible way:

> I would rather be ashes than dust!
> I would rather that my spark should burn out in a brilliant blaze than it should
> Be stifled by dry-rot.
> I would rather be a superb meteor, every atom of me in magnificent glow,
> than a sleepy and permanent planet.
> The proper function of man is to live, not to exist.
> I shall not waste my days in trying to prolong them.
> I shall use my time.[56]

Yet until his death he was torn between a notion of individual cosmic identity as a "superb meteor" and as a "permanent planet" among many planets. On the night of November 21, 1916, London was nauseated and vomiting, and he retired early to his sleeping porch. The next morning his servant Sekine found him in a coma and paralyzed on his right side; Charmian and Eliza were summoned. The doctors who came to attend him tried to resuscitate him by having called out, among other things, that the dam on the ranch had burst, and having Charmian beg her beloved "Mate" to come back to her, but to no avail. Despite their attempts to walk him up and down the halls, London died without regaining full consciousness. The cause of death was listed as uremia, or kidney failure; evidently kidney failure was followed by a massive stroke.[57]

London had kept on working to the end; Charmian notes that the ranch suit he had last worn had in its pockets "a handful of keys, the dingy Klondike coin-sack of chamois, and a few stray notes."[58] London was cremated in this suit with a notepad and pencil in his breast pocket, where he always had them, and on the grave was placed an *ilima* lei from his friends in Hawai'i. Today tourists can visit his gravesite on a knoll near the site of the ruins of his Wolf House on the grounds of the Jack London State Historic Park. He and Charmian are buried under a volcanic rock, a cornerstone rejected by the builders of Wolf House as too large, what Charmian called "once part of the dismantled house that Jack built."[59]

Considering London's illnesses and deteriorating health, it is remarkable that he was working at all at his death, and more so that he wrote stories such as "The Red One" and "The Water Baby." Being ill and distressed usually led to inferior efforts, filled with easy stereotypes like racialism. Yet it is clear that his physical and mental pain in his last months, coupled with new insights, inspired the development of his last protagonists in their own pain and even life-and-death journeys. London realized he was failing, but could not have known how long he had to live. Given his plans for a new novel-in-progress *Cherry*, his unfinished autobiography *Jack Liverpool*, plans for the ranch, plans to travel to Japan, and his efforts to renew his relationship with his daughters, it is easy to conclude that he thought he still had time. Considering his new psychological and stylistic directions of 1916, it's not at all certain that his new work would have resembled his previous work.

By way of an obituary, his Honolulu friend Alexander Hume Ford wrote a reminiscence in the *Mid-Pacific Magazine* in 1917: "As I ask myself, 'Why did I like Jack London from the start?' I know it was because I intuitively guessed

that he loved Humanity more than he loved himself, his work, or life itself."[60] Ford recalls surfing days with London at the Outrigger Canoe Club, where the Londons and their friends would gather in the early evening: "Jack had a hundred ages. With the littlest girl on the beach he was a boon companion and pal. He would drop the most serious conversation for a moment to show her some new trick he had learned. To the boys of the Outrigger Club he was an idol. When he would read aloud they would sit around and worship; in the surf he was one of them." On the Outrigger Club lanai and beach Pan-Pacific meetings were held, one week with Japanese business leaders and the next Koreans, or prominent Hawaiians, or Portuguese, "and the people of every race of the Pacific; and they in return would invite London to their homes, and they seemed to know and understand each other." Ford mentions the congressional delegation to Hawai'i in 1916 and the Pan-Pacific Union dinner in their honor: "there were three hundred men of every race of the Pacific, and sixty Senators and Representatives sat down together, and Jack London made a speech on the 'Language of the Tribe' that brought us closer together and made us begin to *understand*." He spoke of plans to charter "a large steamer, and [visit] every land about the Great Ocean, carrying thereto the propaganda of the Pan-Pacific Movement. Just before he left Honolulu for the last time, he asked his wife, Charmian, to select a gift from him, either a house at Waikiki, which she loved, or a schooner on which they would go cruising around the Pacific, and she chose the schooner." London's death "will never seem real to us, it will never be true. It is only that he is back in Glen Ellen on a visit, and to us there will always be that 'some day' when he will return to Hawaii and be our companion once more."[61]

In the same way that Twain has been rethought by a couple of generations of leading critics from comic to satirist and even nihilist, so London merits reexamination as a writer of much greater complexity than has been granted him in the past. In all his promise and contradiction London must be understood through as many critical lenses as we can muster, for he is often claimed to be, as is Twain, the most widely recognized and read American writer in the world.[62] London had enormous influence on emerging writers of his own generation and upon the next generations of modernist writers. Today he is also read within postmodern frameworks, postcolonial studies (for example, as a writer of Oceania as opposed to the "Pacific Rim"), in gender, class, and race studies, but his racial constructions in particular deserve further analysis. He certainly offers a germane topic for one of the newer schools of British and

American literary theory and criticism, the new Darwinism or evolutionary psychology approaches. Scholars should also consider that London's works fall into contemporary discussions in spatial studies: geographies of new identities, interracial or transpersonal spaces, imperialistic constructions of identity, genres of new geographies, tropes of nation building such as American exceptionalism, geographies of exile or diaspora, spaces of passing or transgressing.

To a greater degree than other American writers of his day, London troubled himself and his reader with a compelling set of contradictions regarding race, class, and gender consciousness, while simultaneously invoking "universal" values of justice, community, and the life-saving strengths of the imagination. He relies upon ancient sources—from biblical and classical mythology to Polynesian mythology to the Jungian archetypes of the unconscious—even as he explores the startling new models of thinking becoming available to him in science and politics. His vision is to the West, seeking new vistas but burdened with the restrictions of the place from which he gazes. As such he continues to exemplify what R. W. B. Lewis describes as his "American Adam" the "special complexities, the buoyant assurance, and the encircling doubt of the still unfolding American scene."[63]

In her biography of her father, Joan London underscores how the issues that concerned London still haunt us: war instead of diplomacy, racism, imperialism, poverty, hunger, homelessness, unemployment, labor exploitation, denial of civil rights. She attributes his being among the most-translated U.S. authors in the world to "his world outlook and awareness of the complexities of life in far-off countries."[64] In "About Jack London," a reminiscence of London's contribution to worldwide socialism, Upton Sinclair states that "If you wish to know the message of his life, as he himself wrote it, take that essay in 'The Cry for Justice,' the last word he wrote upon ethical matters, so far as I know."[65] London wrote in his introduction to Sinclair's *The Cry for Justice* (1915), "He, who by understanding becomes converted to the gospel of service, will serve kindness so that brutality will perish; will serve beauty to the erasement of all that is not beautiful. And he who is strong will serve the weak that they may become strong. He will devote his strength to the making of opportunity for them to make themselves into men rather than into slaves and beasts."[66] London introduced the anthology as a "humanist Holy Book" designed "to serve the needs of groping, yearning humans who seek to discern truth and justice amid the dazzle and murk of the thought-chaos of the present-day world."

No one, he avers, can read it "and not be aware that the world is filled with a vast mass of unfairness, cruelty, and suffering. He will find that it has been observed, during all the ages, by the thinkers, the seers, the poets, and the philosophers." A reader will learn that this fair world

> is not decreed by the will of God nor by any iron law of nature. He will learn that the world can be fashioned a fair world indeed by the humans who inhabit it, by the very simple, and yet most difficult process of coming to an understanding of the world. Understanding, after all, is merely sympathy in its fine correct sense. And such sympathy, in its genuineness, makes toward unselfishness. Unselfishness inevitably connotes service.[67]

These words are a fitting summary of London's last writings about the world and its people, in harmony with the insights of his last Hawaiian stories, ideas troubled and confused in many of his earlier works.

London will continue to reveal insights into other writers of his day, not just Frank Norris, Stephen Crane, and Theodore Dreiser. Comparisons of Carrie Meeber and Saxon Brown Roberts, of Maggie of the streets and London's working-class poor women, and London's versus Norris's California merit investigation, but there is a major difference between London and the other naturalists when it comes to race.[68] While they create nonwhite characters, these are almost always stereotypes, and, most revealingly, their authors do not *identify* with them. London is a transitional figure from nineteenth-century preoccupations of reformism, scientific materialism, imperialism and anti-imperialism, racialism, and Darwinism to the era of post–World War I despair and reevaluation of social absolutes. He might be debated in a classroom today for his advanced ideas on Darwinism as he might be cited as an example of racialism. If he had not written fiction, this might be where we would have left him. But his subjects and techniques have persisted as artistically important and influential. He predicts later modern U.S. writers' alienation as he searches for alternate houses of identity and new modes of literary production: O'Neill, Lewis, Hemingway, Fitzgerald, Wright, Mailer, and Kerouac. His later influence appears in James Michener, Paul Theroux, Russell Banks, Barry Lopez, and many others.[69]

There is little scholarly research on London's influence of Hemingway, though he is perhaps London's most obvious literary heir. Their respective treatments of race, however, are very different. When reading Hemingway

against London in terms of race, Hemingway's easy racist and ethnic stereotypes are striking compared with London's worried negotiations of racial identity and integrity. Unlike London, Hemingway does not tend to explore racial identity per se; indeed, even in *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952) the narrator reductively constructs the "ethnic" hero's subjectivity. London's identification with Johnson is a stark contrast to the way Hemingway's *To Have and Have Not* (1937) speaks of "spics" and "greasers" and "niggers." Compared to London, Hemingway is not at all worried about "race," though he shares with him a fascination with other places, peoples, and languages, all primarily in the spirit of personal adventure.[70]

London's influence on writers of color has scarcely been noted in the scholarship. Richard Wright was clearly influenced by London's naturalism. In *Black Boy* (1945) Wright describes how his protagonist sneaks a library card and spends his evenings devouring books, discovering H. L. Mencken and the naturalist writers. Like Martin Eden, the protagonist in Wright's novel toils all day and tries to read all night and must keep his books secret from whites where he works. This protagonist's admiration of Mencken echoes London's authorial goals: "Yes, this man was fighting, fighting with words. He was using words as a weapon, using them as one would use a club."[71] But like Martin, the hero in *Black Boy* finds that his reading distances him from his former life and also alienates him in his "successful" life.[72] In *The Color Curtain* (1955), reportage on a conference held concerning decolonialization in Bandung, Indonesia, in 1955, Wright mentions London in a discussion of global racial competition and echoes London's attempt to make Americans aware of the technological and political progress of Asians:

> For the "Yellow Peril," as Jack London conceived it, was not primarily a racial matter; it was economic. When the day comes that Asian and African raw materials are processed in Asia and Africa by labor whose needs are not as inflated as those of Western laborers, the supremacy of the Western world, economic, cultural, and political, will have been broken once and for all on this earth and a de-Occidentalization of mankind will have definitely set in. . . . It is far preferable that the Western world willingly aid in the creation of Jack London's "Yellow Peril" in terms of Asians' and Africans' processing their own raw materials, which would necessitate a radical adjustment of the West's own systems of society and economics, than to face militant hordes buoyed and sustained by racial and religious passions.[73]

Wright used the famous author to support his own vision of economic development in African and Asian nations, since his Marxist class analysis—like that London on and off supported—insisted on solidarity across racial lines.[74]

Another African American modernist, Oscar Micheaux, named the hero of his novel *The Wind from Nowhere* (1944) "Martin Eden." The story of a mixed-race family in South Dakota, the novel begins with a prosperous landowner who soon faces a drama of failed passing and disloyal children who pass their dark-skinned father off as an "old colored servant who helped to raise them" when visitors come. One brother, who is also dark-skinned, is drafted into the army and assigned to a "colored" unit; distraught, he stands before a mirror in his tent one night and kills himself with his service pistol.[75]

The distinguished Mexican American author Américo Paredes noted in an interview that London was an influence upon his early writing: "Really, for me it opened doors. . . . [F]or awhile I thought Jack London was a Chicano."[76] Paredes echoes this in an article analyzing stereotypes of Mexicans in Anglo literature:

> I well remember the strong impression of pleasurable shock that I experienced on a quiet summer afternoon in 1930, when I first read Jack London's short story "The Mexican." In the red-blooded, action-packed, he-man type of story such as London wrote, Mexicans had to be either criminals or clowns. But here was a Mexican who was the hero of the story—an idealist, earning money in the occupation he detested [prize-fighting] so that other Mexicans could buy guns and overthrow a dictatorship in Mexico. And, wonder of wonders, the people trying to cheat the Mexican out of his winnings, the dyed-in-the-wool baddies, were Anglos! This could not really be, unless Jack London was really a Mexican in disguise; like Tomás Alba Edison. But good old Jack disappointed me in others of his stories; and it would be a long time before I again saw that image of the Mexican in English-language fiction.[77]

Che Guevara remembered a Jack London story one day after being wounded in a skirmish, one of his biographers notes; he thought he was dying, and his thoughts turned to London's "To Build a Fire."[78] Nadezhda K. Krupskaya read her husband Lenin London's "Love of Life" on his deathbed. Most recently the work of Louisiana poet Yusef Komunyakaa in his poem "Boxing Day" (1988) and Chinese novelist Jiang Rong in his novel *Wolf Totem* (2004) acknowledge London's influence.

Throughout this book I have adapted models of so-called minority and particularly African American literature such as the slave narrative, the narrative

of passing, or identification with Otherness to read London's works. Perhaps calling London a minority writer seems inappropriate, since it would appear to be just another appropriation of discourses of Otherness by a "mainstream" white Western critic analyzing a "mainstream" white Western writer. But as we look back over the facts of life, and, more importantly, the use of his experiences of race in his writings, his transition from the personal to the cultural, one concludes that there are strong parallels between the racial tropes and underlying preoccupations used by London and those used by writers of color. And, as we have also seen, he was unfortunately often capable of obscuring these deeply imagined and artistically productive sources when he turned to racialist theories and their abstractions.

London was born poor, of uncertain patrimony, and as a child he experienced the slavery of the "work beast" class. His family was forced to move many times, working like migrant laborers or, as he would put it, "like dogs." Their society was racially mixed, especially in Oakland. London knew what it was like to be rejected, homeless, an outcast, to work one's way through high school as a janitor, and he would never forget Virginia Prentiss's story of her escape from slavery nor his own mother's coldness to him—nor her racism. He went to prison and was released having seen the depths of the "social pit." He saw himself in competition with other ethnic and racial groups, though he rejected white bourgeoisie to which he once aspired. He became keenly aware of the problems of "passing" into this class and of how difficult it was to imagine himself satisfactorily once he achieved this success. He espoused radical politics and was known as an "agitator" with an FBI file. He wrote for and was read by the working class, and he believed he spoke for the struggles of common people, with sensitivity toward oppression anywhere. He thus shared many of the conditions of "minority" writers and more so than other white writers of his day faced fundamental questions about his proper (and raced) identity as a writer and public figure. All of this demonstrates three things: first, the enormous importance of race to London; what is underrecognized as the influence African American writers had on white writers of the period; and finally the centrality of race in American culture itself, so that any narrative of American identity must inevitably address it. London's use of racial tropes confirms that "race" and by extension racial tropes in literature are not essential to particular peoples; instead, they are constructions of selves and modes of behavior that can be put on or taken off by many a self and other people with whom the self has contact.

Ironically, London's political voice in American literary studies has received much greater recognition abroad than at home; whereas many Americans still think of him only as the guy who wrote the dog books, he is constantly the subject of exhibits, symposia, magazine special issues, and political debates in dozens of countries. The Internet and Web-based databases make it easier now to track his readership both within the United States and in other countries. His positioning against the rising Hitler in 1930s socialist and communist newspapers in France was the subject of one recent exhibit, while a new bibliography of his extensive translations into Mongolian has also recently been made available.[79] Yet scholars lack a comprehensive look at London's international reputation, despite Hensley Woodbridge's considerable early contributions. Such international scholars as Eiji Tsujii, Sachiko Nakada, Shuyan Li, Vil Bykov, Reinhard Wissdorf, and Noël Mauberret, to name only a few, are engaging more and more their U.S. counterparts in debating London's racial ideas in an international forum. More than any other American writer of his day—and perhaps of our own as well—London found multiple houses for identity around the world and portrayed believable characters from many cultures. The most significant U.S. writers must meaningfully engage with the greatest problem present in American society and culture, as well as around the globe, the problem of racism, and so must their readers.

At the time of his death London was at work on a racially and culturally experimental work, *Cherry*, the novel of a half-Japanese half-Caucasian girl in Hawai'i and her struggle for self-determination and destiny. Once again he offers a protagonist attempting to overcome cultural and "racial" differences in order to shape an identity. That London continues to whet our curiosity about different cultures and imaginations around the world from their different points of view is just one of the reasons he will continue to engage readers. My hope is that this book will encourage further study of what I believe to be the central fact of his career: the "houses of pride" that race built in his life and work.

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NOTES

ABBREVIATIONS

The Jack London Collections in the Huntington Library are cited throughout the notes: manuscript collection (HEH JL), ephemera (HEH JLE), broadsides (HEH JLB), and rare books (HEH HL).

INTRODUCTION

1. London, *Letters of Jack London*, 244. Subsequent references are cited in the text as *Letters*.

2. London's intellectual and identity conflicts illustrate Kwame Anthony Appiah's idea that social identities can be obstacles to the pursuit of an ethical life: when a social identity is incoherent, it has "a set of norms associated with it, such that, in the actual world, attempting to conform to some subset of those norms undermines one's capacity to conform to others. . . . The incoherence of a social identity can lead to incoherence in individual identities: to someone's having an identity that generates projects and ambitions that undermine one another" (Appiah, 282).

3. Dale L. Ross, 57.

4. Joseph C. Sciambra, 11.

5. Sciambra, 1–2.

6. Joan London, *Jack London and His Times*, 378.

7. Philip S. Foner, 59.

8. Joan London, *Jack London and His Times*, 268.

9. Paul Lauter, 17.

10. For major contributions, see especially the works of Susan Nuernberg, Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin, Clarice Stasz, Andrew Furer, Gary Riedl, Thomas R. Tietze, Joseph C. Sciambra, Lawrence I. Berkove, Jonathan Auerbach, David Moreland, Noël Mauberret, Eijii Tsjuii, James Slagel, Rod Edmond, Lawrence Phillips, and Jessica Greening Loudermilk.

11. David Brion Davis, 62.

12. London, *Complete Short Stories of Jack London*, 1993. Subsequent references to London's short stories are from this edition and are cited in the text as *Stories*.

CHAPTER 1. JACK LONDON AND RACE

1. Stoddard Martin, 4.

2. Grief passes freely about the Pacific as London's fantasy figure, in contrast to the toll the *Snark* voyage took on London's health. Though Grief needs no doctors to survive the Pacific, his name is a marker of London's struggles there.

3. Lawrence Berkove, "Jack London's Second Thoughts," 60–76.

4. Henry James, preface, *Portrait of a Lady*, x–xi.

5. *Haole* is a slightly pejorative term for a Caucasian person in Hawai'i; *kama'āina* is a Hawaiian term meaning either that one was born in Hawai'i or that one has lived there long enough to belong.

6. I use the term "Melanesian" in its historical sense only; as a term based on skin color and applied by Westerners, it is rejected by indigenous peoples today in favor of self-naming.

7. Charmian London, *Book of Jack London*, I:143.

8. Earle Labor, in Homer L. Haughey and Connie Kale Johnson, 4.

9. London, "The House Beautiful," in *Revolution and Other Essays*, 166.

10. Haughey and Johnson, 5.

11. London, "House Beautiful," 166–67, 171–72.

12. London said he used an outer and an inner self to structure his stories: "There are tricks and devices I use—tools in the art. I build a motive—a thesis, and my story has a dual nature. On the surface is the simple story any child can read—full of action, movement, color. Under that is the real story, philosophical, complex, full of meaning. One reader gets the interesting story, the other sees my philosophy of life" (quoted in Russ Kingman, *Pictorial Life of Jack London*, 90).

13. George Wharton James, 366–67.

14. Ibid.

15. Joan London, *Jack London and His Times*, 3.

16. Ibid., 11–12. In an early science fiction tale, "A Thousand Deaths," London imagines a son who is the victim of his scientist-father's experiments at playing Frankenstein; the son is repeatedly killed by his father then restored to life in his father's laboratory.

17. Joan London, *Jack London and His Times*, 35–36.

18. Jack London to Maitland LeRoy, 3-page signed typescript, 24 March 1900. Collection of Peter H. Stern, Boston, Mass.

19. Franklin Walker, 12. London did not look for an apprenticeship nor make any

attempt to use skills he learned in school: "On the contrary, a great restlessness possessed him. He was to spend the next four years holding odd jobs, rebelling against routine responsibilities, seeking adventure both inside and outside the law." He escaped to the Bay, where he could "sail on it unrestricted, . . . sleep on it where [he] pleased, [and] make a living . . . by the use of brawn and cunning. . . . For most of the four years Jack London was what today is termed a juvenile delinquent" (Walker, 22–23).

20. Charmian London, *Book of Jack London*, I:34.

21. Becky London, "Becky Remembers Aunt Jennie."

22. Joan London, *Jack London and His Times*, 29–30. Prentiss reportedly feared that Flora's "spirits" would overcome the boy. The worst quarrel the two mothers are said to have had occurred, according to Eugene Lasartemy and Mary Rudge, when London was 5 years old. Flora decided to use him as her medium, dressing him in feathers and war paint and making the terrified child lie on the middle of her parlor table as her clients all touched him and chanted (Eugene P. Lasartemay and Mary Rudge, *For Love of Jack London*, 80). This is an invaluable book, if fictionalized to some degree, on London and the African American community of turn-of-the-century Oakland and Alameda. It includes material from interviews with people in Oakland who knew intimately about the relationship between Jack London and Virginia Prentiss. Unfortunately, while its sources and research are named, its lack of footnotes means that it is not, in scholarly terms, authoritative; in addition, the authors make up dialogue for its subjects. In conducting interviews with Rudge to check facts for this book, I learned that the late Eugene Lasartemay's files with his interview notes were lost at his death when his heirs disposed of his property. For another treatment of London's relationship with Virginia Prentiss, see Clarice Stasz, *Jack London's Women*, largely based on Lasartemay and Rudge but also offering information from other family members.

23. Lasartemay and Rudge, 28.

24. On the flyleaf of a first edition of *The People of the Abyss* he wrote, "To dear Mammy Prentiss, With best love, From one who loves you well. Your son, Jack, Piedmont, California, May 11, 1903." According to Larsartemay and Rudge, when he referred to her once in print as "Mammy" Jennie, she was upset by his casual slur. He is said to have defended his choice as the appropriate one, since he and her own children referred to her this way, as was common in those days, and he wanted people to know she was his foster mother (158–59).

25. Lasartemay and Rudge, 161.

26. Clarice Stasz, 22.

27. In later life Eliza became his ranch superintendent and most trusted friend, and it is to her and Charmian's efforts after his death to preserve his copyrights, and to those of Eliza's son and grandson, Irving Shepard and Milo Shepard, that his ranch

today owes its existence—as does the huge collection of London material at the Huntington Library.

28. Becky London, "Becky and Aunt Jennie," n.p.

29. For a time London felt that Prentiss had "sided" with Flora and Bessie, as in his notes for his never-completed autobiography *Jack Liverpool* (Jack and Charmian London Collection, Merrill Library, Utah State University, box 24, folder 4).

30. Charmian recalls in her biography that in Jack's childhood, "One bright spot in Alameda was the spick and span cottage of Mammy Jenny Prentiss near Willow Street Station. Her bright-eyed foster-baby ran away to the crooning embrace of the coloured woman whose greatest pride was her own untarnished blood, and who always was tastefully and pridefully dressed. There her spoiled white child was sure of welcome and wondrous pastry, dispensed with adoration and a lavish hand, and there 'Will and Annie were like cousins.' Flora Wellman's own stiff pride of race had already made its mark on Johnnie's subjective operations, but . . . it had not become a recognized norm" (*Book of Jack London*, I:34).

31. Becky London, "Becky and Aunt Jennie," n.p.

32. Virginia Prentiss also regaled the girls with stories of their father as a youth, as all children love to hear: "I know that was where," Becky says, "I learned so much about Daddy before he and mother ever met." For her, as with her father, Prentiss was "the person who meant the most to me as a little girl (aside from Daddy). She loved me and I loved her. I knew that, never doubted it. It made a great difference to me when I felt I was an outsider, not part of the family with mother and Joan. I'll never forget her" (Becky London, "Becky and Aunt Jennie," n.p.).

33. Lasartemay and Rudge, 30–31.

34. Charmian London, *Book of Jack London*, I:36.

35. In *John Barleycorn* London recalls that his mother "was convinced that the dark-eyed Latin races were profoundly sensitive, profoundly treacherous, and profoundly murderous. Again and again, drinking in the strangeness and the fearsomeness of the world from her lips, I had heard her state that if one offended an Italian, no matter how slightly and unintentionally, he was certain to retaliate by stabbing one in the back. That was her particular phrase—'stab you in the back.' [But] . . . I had some glimmering inkling of the sacredness of hospitality. Here was a treacherous, sensitive, murderous Italian, offering me hospitality" (26–27; subsequent references are cited in the text).

36. Joseph C. Sciambra, 11. While London wrote of so many "races" and cultures, he seems to have had a blind spot in his fiction when it came to African Americans, who appear only in *The Road*, in one minor short story, "A Curious Fragment," and then in journalistic portraits of heavyweight champion Jack Johnson, all, incidentally, portrayed in a positive light. London could and did theorize about "the Negro" as part of a list of other racial groups, but he tends to avoid particulars. Given his relationship with Prentiss, how could he connect theory to reality when it came to African Americans?

37. Franklin Walker, 30.

38. London, *The Road*, 115. In the chapters "Pictures" and "'Pinched,'" London describes at length an African American man he met in the penitentiary, who became his "cuff-mate," whom he both calls "the coon" and hails as "a comrade" he "'cottened' to" and praises as an ace at poker. He also tells the story of "a handsome young mulatto" who is murdered by fellow inmates for "stand[ing] for his rights" (108).

39. Franklin Walker, 31. Russ Kingman calls London's prison experience "the most instructive of all." Imprisoned without due process in a country in which a man was supposed to be innocent before proven guilty, he "could have chuck[ed] all his ideals and turn[ed] to crime, but he had studied that route too well and he knew where it led." He listened to the stories the prisoners had to tell, just as he had listened to the sourdoughs in the Klondike. He heard from "laboring men who were fired when their muscles were no longer strong, and he saw men who were let go when they lost an arm or a leg in an unprotected machine. He met others who were well-educated but who couldn't find a place in society because they challenged the accepted concepts of their day." The "class struggle" was no longer "a meaningless lecture delivered by a vagrant socialist on a soapbox—it was now sheer, naked reality, the implications of which he was beginning to understand." When London left Oakland he still believed in Kipling's work ethic: "He had believed the teachers and preachers who proclaimed the honor of work. Now he could see that hard labor was not as honorable as he had been told" (Kingman, *Pictorial Life*, 62–63).

40. Joan London, *Jack London and His Times*, 379.

41. Ibid., 4.

42. Ibid., 16.

43. Ibid., 55. Joan sees "America's 'big-brother' role" as "well-rehearsed and smoothly performed: while her statesmen loudly proclaimed their interest and concern for the small countries in Central and South America," they were quietly acquiring them. By 1900 the United States was second only to England and France in colonial world power, whereas twenty years before that it had ranked only twelfth with a minuscule navy.

44. Ibid., 109–13.

45. Ibid., 157–60.

46. Eric Carl Link, 11–12, 18.

47. Donald Pizer, "Frank Norris and the Frontier," 44–45.

48. Theodore Roosevelt, *Winning of the West*, I:30–31; quoted in Pizer, "Frank Norris and the Frontier," 46.

49. Quoted in Matthew Frye Jacobson, 211.

50. Quoted in ibid., 212. Irish American writer James Jeffrey Roche expressed sympathy with the Filipinos and criticized white colonizers. His poem, "The White Wolf's Cry," remarks that the colonialists' "skin—like the leper's—is white!" He also wonders: "Where is this madness of foreign conquest to end, and how many drops of

American and other blood must be shed in order to attain the result of civilizing the Asiatics and conferring to them such blessings as other red and black men enjoy under the beneficent rule of the superior race, here at home in the land of the free? We have accounted, in part, to Heaven for our treatment of the black man. We have yet to account for our treatment of the red man. With such unsettled and halfsettled accounts to our debit, it would seem to be foolish to open another with the brown man."

51. Quoted in Jacobson, 206–07.

52. Josiah Strong, 36–39; HEH JL 337222.

53. Richard Gid Powers, 2289.

54. Pizer, "Frank Norris and the Frontier," 46.

55. Frederick Jackson Turner, 205–06; quoted in Pizer, "Frank Norris and the Frontier," 47.

56. Tzvetan Todorov, 172–73. "If the neighbor on my landing tells me, in a confidential tone of voice, that 'Blacks stink,' it is not because she has read Gobineau; she knows nothing about theory, and her racism has not the least scientific pretension. In contemporary France, racialism is quasi-inexistent . . . —while racism thrives more than ever" (173). Joseph Arthur, Comte de Gobineau (1816–1882), was a French diplomat and man of letters and a chief French proponent of the theory of Nordic supremacy.

57. Racialism, Todorov also notes, displayed seemingly contradictory affinities to relativism (denying shared humanity by perceiving discontinuity among "races") as well as to universalism ("the existence of a single set of criteria which allows certain 'races' to be deemed superior and others inferior"). Today "the ideology of cultural difference" has replaced racialism, but it has inherited excessive universalism and excessive relativism: "Universalism has acquired a bad reputation" as "nothing more or less than unconscious ethnocentrism." This failure, however, "should not lead us to abandon the idea itself, for such an abandonment would lead us to renounce the very idea of shared humanity. . . . Rather, the restricted universality of the past should be opened up as much as possible, until it is able to account for both the diversity of cultures and the differences which exist within one and the same culture." Like London, Todorov stresses the "common human identity," which makes possible "communication, dialogue, and, in the final analysis, the comprehension of Otherness." An incommunicable culture "presupposes adherence to a racialist, apartheid-like set of beliefs, postulating as it does insurmountable discontinuity within the human species" (Todorov, 175–76). Abdul R. JanMohamed observes that with this dichotomous sort of thinking, we end up with a cultural studies of stereotypes and false oppositions, of "manichean allegory" or "a field of diverse yet interchangeable oppositions between white and black, good and evil, superiority and inferiority, or, as Todorov puts it, 'On your right, disgusting white colonialists; on your left, the innocent black victims' (JanMohamed, 63).

58. Charles Chesnutt, *Marrow of Tradition*, 101.

59. Jacobson, 92–93.

60. As Reginald Horsman has pointed out, although "Anglo Saxons" were at the top of the racial hierarchy, they never really existed historically the way people believed they did: "Anglo-Saxon England" was not the golden age of prefeudal independence, nor was it racially pure. It was also made up of Celts, assorted Germanic tribes, Vikings, and Normans—and of course descendants of Romans and their slaves from all over the known world. The term "Anglo-Saxon" became less and less precise as the nineteenth century advanced: "An Irishman might be described as a lazy, ragged, dirty Celt when he landed in New York, but if his children settled in California they might well be praised as part of the vanguard of the energetic Anglo-Saxon people poised for the plunge into Asia" (Horsman, 140–44).

61. Paul Peppis, 377.

62. London, "The Human Drift," *Human Drift*, 3.

63. Richard Dyer, 2.

64. Frank Norris, *Octopus*, 11; Norris, *McTeague*, 32–33.

65. Contemporary reviews reveal no protest about London's racism. The hundreds of letters between London and George Brett, his editor at Macmillan, hardly mention race at all. His views were criticized, tellingly, only in his friend Anna Strunsky's review of *The Son of the Wolf*. For a time, she felt, he had seemingly forgotten Marx's argument in *Das Kapital* that "Labor in white skin cannot emancipate itself where the black skin is branded" (181).

66. Peppis, 377. By way of comparison to London's contemporaries, Peppis has described how, prior to World War I, modernist writers such as Ford Madox Ford and Gertrude Stein failed to understand or deploy race in a straightforward fashion. They defended period doctrines of imperialism and racialism, even though they displayed a "revolutionary" faith in individual agency, commitment to artistic and political transformation, and skepticism about established cultural and political institutions.

67. David Mike Hamilton, 13–14.

68. Sciambra, 3.

69. Not surprisingly, given his "Expansion" speech, London placed many articles about U.S. foreign intervention in his subject files. He included socialist literature as published in *The Challenge*, edited by millionaire socialist H. Gaylord Wilshire in Los Angeles, who praised U.S. expansionism, and some articles on world financial crises arguing U.S. superiority to England, like Andrew Carnegie on "British Pessimism." England was seen undemocratic, "a nation of servants," a view London would employ in *The People of the Abyss*, in which he suggests that if the East Ender were transplanted to the healthy soil and open air of America, he would improve himself and his "race." (All of London's subject-file articles referenced here are in his ephemera files at the Huntington Library, HEH JLE 549.)

70. An essay called "The Rule of the English-Speaking Folk" in London's subject

files expresses the notion that the spread of English language, whether by Britons or Americans, is the most important tool for world domination.

71. The speech was published as "On Expansion" in 1900.

72. Ibid., 15.

73. Thomas Nelson Page, 566.

74. Ibid., 568.

75. And of course they were right. As Albert Wendt, the Samoan novelist, has observed, the fastest way to end global racism is to encourage each marriageable person to marry someone of another race; that way, by the time there are grandchildren, race will have ceased to matter.

76. On his Beauty Ranch in Sonoma County, California, London practiced up-to-date stockbreeding and was proud of his champion horses and bulls.

77. Among the many articles in the magazines London published in exposing the error of such "science" and the evils of racism, which he tore out and filed, is Charles Chesnutt's blistering review in *The Critic* of William Hannibal Thomas's racist book *The American Negro* (1901). In a 1905 review of a book called *The Negro a Beast* published by the Bible House of St. Louis, which London also saved, Edward Atkinson describes "the most sacrilegious book ever issued from a press in this country, . . . said to be securing a very wide circulation among the poor whites of the Cotton States," portraying the Negro not as a descendant of Adam or Eve but of the serpent, claiming that the Hebrew word for serpent means "black," reducing the black man from human to another species (Atkinson, 203).

78. Joan London, *Jack London and His Times*, 209. See also Thomas R. Tietze and Gary Riedl's introduction to the 2001 edition of London's *A Son of the Sun*, xx.

79. Tietze and Riedl, introduction" to *Son of the Sun*, xx.

80. London advised one correspondent: "Read my *Burning Daylight*, in which I show a successful superman who at the end of his triumph and career, throws his thirty million dollars to the winds in order to win to a greater thing, namely love" (*Letters*, 1439).

81. London, *Cruise of the* Snark, 3. Subsequent references are cited in the text. We may read Ernest Everhard of *The Iron Heel* as an amalgam of London's superman and socialist heroes. Ernest is the ultimate socialist leader, and that is the problem: he is a born individualist like Wolf Larsen, and the book suffers from London's divided purpose.

82. HEH JLE 1365, box 551.

83. David Starr Jordan, *Care and Culture of Men*, 58.

84. Quoted in Sciambra, 87. One wonders whether Jordan's title later inspired the final choice of title for *The Call of the Wild*, another version of a "fit" destiny.

85. David Starr Jordan, *Imperial Democracy*, 24.

86. David Starr Jordan, *Foot-notes to Evolution*, 262–63.

87. Jordan described the Philippines, for example, as "Nature's asylum for degen-

erates" where "the conditions of life are such as to forbid Anglo-Saxon colonization" (*Imperial Democracy*, 93–94).

88. Benjamin Kidd, *Control of the Tropics*, 54.

89. Joan London, *Jack London and His Times*, 212.

90. Sciambra, 45.

91. Ernst Haeckel, *The History of Creation* and *The Riddle of the Universe*, II:428.

92. John Fiske, *Outlines of Cosmic Philosophy*, I:98.

93. Sciambra, 58.

94. Fiske, *Outlines*, I:443.

95. Sciambra, 62, 64–65. Like Auguste Comte (1798–1857), whom London also read, Fiske was a proponent of phrenology, that skull size and shape determined the size and power of a brain. It was thought by racialists that "long heads" (Northern whites) have narrow foreheads and clear-cut chins; short heads (Southern "others") had wide heads and receding chins.

96. Haeckel, *History of Creation*, II:430.

97. James Francis Katherinus Hewitt, *Ruling Races of Prehistoric Times*, HEH JL 334747.

98. Ibid., I:v–vii.

99. See, for example, ibid., I:30.

100. Ibid., I:562–64.

101. Ibid., I:539–41.

102. In volume 2 of Hewitt London noted passages on the "Aryan" hero, who would insist "on working out his own purpose, and who shows his right to rule by his successful eradication of all lawlessness and wrong," which suggest certain elements of "The Son of the Wolf." Another marked passage has to do with animal heroes: "those who sought to be the most successful hunters must be nearly allied to the wild animals, not only in strength but also in craft and tenacity; and hence the right to rule and direct the animal campaigns against their animal foes was conceded to those who could cope with the difficulties," a tradition that through a father-totem transmits "ancestral qualities by descent." This faith "caused the tribes who excelled their neighbours in courage, strength, and cunning to take the names of the sons of the bear, and those in whom craft, guile, and endurance were the most conspicuous to call themselves the sons of the wolf" (Hewitt, II:xiii).

103. In 2005 a survey was conducted by Jon D. Miller at Michigan State University of residents of the United States and 32 European countries who were asked to respond "True" or "False" to the statement, "Human beings, as we know them, developed from earlier species of animals." U.S. respondents comprised the second-highest percentage of adults who said that the statement was false.

104. Jonathan Howard, 75–76; Charles Darwin, *Descent of Man*, I:186.

105. Charles Darwin, *Origin of Species*, 489.

106. Richard Hofstadter, 34.

107. London, *Martin Eden*, 108. Subsequent references are cited in the text.

108. Anthony J. Naso, 13.

109. Naso, 29.

110. Herbert Spencer, *Principles of Biology*, I:356–57.

111. Herbert Spencer, *Social Statics*, 373.

112. Anna (Strunsky) Walling Papers, Sterling Memorial Library, Yale University, series 3, box 32, folder 392, "Jack London" (95 pp.); series 3, box 32, folder 393, "Jack London" (116 pp.); and series 3, box 33, folder 401 (10 pp.).

113. Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin, "To Love or Not to Love?" 258. See also Tavernier-Courbin, "Jack London and Anna Strunsky," 23–24.

114. Quoted in Rose Wilder Lane, 30. Later, in letters to Joan, London boasts of how he gave her his "seed" (*Letters*, 1298–301), and, given their constructions of race for each other, Bessie more than once begged her ex-husband to "treat me white" in his financial obligations (cf. *Letters*, 765).

115. The break-up is recorded in *Letters*, 306–08. Walling's memoir and subsequent letters to London strongly suggest she harbored romantic feelings for him for much of her adult life.

116. For more on London's portrayals of Darwinian sexual imperatives, see Bert Bender, *Evolution and "the Sex Problem,"* and Bender, "Jack London and 'the Sex Problem,'" 147–88.

117. Spencer, *Principles of Biology*, I:201.

118. Tavernier-Courbin, "To Love," 265–66.

119. Anna Strunsky Walling to Charmian Kittredge London, 17 Jan. 1919; quoted in Charmian London, *Book of Jack London*, I:323–24. As Tavernier-Courbin observes, "London could probably have written Anna's side of the argument far more convincingly than she did," and with her own cool reserve, she could have written his as well (Tavernier-Courbin, "To Love," 266).

120. For a full account of Anna's marriage, see James Boylan, *Revolutionary Lives*.

121. Anna Strunsky Walling, "Memoirs of Jack London," 13.

122. Ibid., 13–14.

123. Quoted in Jonathan Howard, 107.

124. Berkove, "Jack London and Evolution," 243–45; Hofstadter, 4–8.

125. Berkove, "Before Adam," 2. See also Berkove, "Thomas Stevens."

126. Thomas H. Huxley, *Evolution and Ethics*, 80–81, 83.

127. Ibid., 33, 45.

128. Berkove, "Jack London and Evolution," 246, 253.

129. Pizer, *Realism and Naturalism*, xiii, 29, 37, 39–40.

130. Ibid., 11–12.

131. Pizer, "Late Nineteenth-Century," 191.

CHAPTER 2. TRUE NORTH OR WHITE SILENCE?

1. Robert H. Redding, 7.
2. Pierre Berton, 408.
3. London, *Jack London by Himself*.
4. Franklin Walker, 23.
5. *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, 17 July 1897.
6. London, "The Shrinkage of the Planet," in *Revolution*, 153.
7. Walker, 13–14.
8. London, "The Gold Hunters of the North," in *Revolution*, 154.
9. Walker, 185. On June 15 London wrote: "Lafcadio Hearne [sic] & Japanese Half-caste—beautiful, half-breed women seen here. Caucasian features, slender form, delicate oval of face, head, describe her environment. How much harder her lot than the Japanese Half Caste. Ubiquitous Anglo Saxon White man from Sacramento living with them, brotherinlaw [sic] etc. innumerable." That night, he added, "10 p.m. Indian village, only old people left. The perpetual cry for medicine[.] Stoicism of the sufferers. Traces of white blood among the papooses everywhere apparent." On June 23, he encountered a Malemute village (very poor and "miserable"): "11 p.m. Andreasky. . . . How miserable their condition yet how happy. How they come out & sit on bank, naked legs, bodies etc in chill north wind. Trading for curios, etc. flour for fish & game. Method of trading. At midnight, Malemute paddling kayak & singing—weird effect. They seem never to sleep, are always up" (Jack London, *Yukon Diary* 1897, HEH JL 1447).
10. Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin, "Jack London's Portrayal," 28.
11. Jonathan Auerbach, introduction, xiv.
12. James Dickey, introduction, 7–16. Durkheim, a leading French sociologist who sought religion in social reality rather than in the individual, argued that since "religious force is nothing other than the collective and anonymous force of the clan, and since this can be represented in the mind only in the form of the totem, the totemic emblem is like the visible body the god" (184–85, 220; see also John C. Durham, "Durkheim on the Sacred," and Sigmund Freud, *Totem and Taboo*, 807–09).
13. Jeanne Campbell Reesman, *Jack London*, 10–68 and passim.
14. *Oakland Enquirer*, 29 April 1901. Reviews of *The Son of the Wolf* cited here are from one of London's huge clippings scrapbooks at the Huntington Library (HEH JL 517, scrapbook 1, 1899–1900).
15. "Literary Page," *Brooklyn Eagle*, 14 Feb. 1901.
16. [Anon.], review of *The Son of the Wolf*, *Commercial Advertiser*, 8 Dec. 1900, HEH JL 517 scrapbook 1. Indeed reviews of *The God of His Fathers* (1901) and *Children of the Frost* (1902) routinely express puzzlement over the number of nonwhite characters. One reviewer begins, "In a certain sense Mr. Jack London's 'Children of the Frost' may be classed as an ethnographical study. Occasionally there is a person-

age not an Indian, but the main actors are those wild men who live up in the furthest Northwest." Some reviews (see, for example, *New York Times*, 25 Oct. 1902) contrast London's Indians to the tamer ones of Cooper's romances and relegate them to an age long ago, not to their presentness: "how terrible must have been mankind at the very beginning! What horrors were committed, when the purely animal instincts held their sway! . . . We have no hesitation in saying that the author of 'Children of the Frost' holds a domain which is quite his own by right of conquest" (*New York Times*, 25 Oct. 1902). The implication is that by his "right of conquest" London has both experienced the wildness offered by the Indians but also, like the other whites in the Northland, appropriated it. But a different reviewer counters that London "reaches down to the very bottom of the human heart" with his portraits of "aborigines" in *The Children of the Frost*. "Most of these tales are written without reference to the white race, exhibiting the native tribes in the full possession of their own lands and lives. Mr. London is able to analyze savage motives and methods, and the great primal forces swaying mankind stand bare but not repellent in his presentation. The other stories have to do with the coming of 'civilization,' and here the author's sympathy for the weaker men and women who are driven to the wall is quite the finest thing in the book" (*Dial* [Chicago], 16 [Nov. 1902], 9).

17. Permeability of racial lines is also a feature of London's caveman fantasy, *Before Adam* (1907). As Lisa Hopkins has observed, London's account of evolution in this novel differs from those of his contemporaries, especially H. Rider Haggard's imperialist agenda and fixed developmental hierarchy of races. Instead, London deflects heredity by allowing his characters to be influenced by other factors, including environment, so that characters have the possibility to evolve.

18. Auerbach, introduction, xvi–xvii.

19. Ibid., xix–xx. Auerbach emphasizes that the destruction that comes to the Indians is ironically "the tragic destruction of patriarchal law itself" at the hands of patriarchal white hegemony. For both sexes, "the economy of the totem, based on the principle of exogamy, has turned into the rule of the capitalist State" (xx–xxi).

20. Kirby Brown, 3.

21. Ann Strunsky, review of *The Son of the Wolf*.

22. Brown, 5.

23. Ibid., 8

24. James I. McClintock, 5.

25. Charmian London, *Book of Jack London,* I:384.

26. Russ Kingman, *Pictorial Life,* 103–04.

27. Earle Labor and Jeanne Campbell Reesman, 37–38.

28. London, *Daughter of the Snows*, 14. Subsequent references are cited in the text.

29. Joseph C. Sciambra, 17.

30. Charles N. Watson Jr., *Novels of Jack London*, 28.

31. To illustrate the social status of "Celts" in Anglo-Saxonist thinking, in chapter 29, when Matt McCarthy warns St. Vincent to stay away from Frona, St. Vincent pulls a gun on him and calls him, "'You Irish pig!'" (200).

32. Ambrose Bierce, 105.

33. E. L. Doctorow, 1–4. At the time of this writing, Amazon.com listed around five hundred English editions of *Call of the Wild*.

34. Labor and Reesman, 133.

35. Alfred Kazin, 88.

36. Charles C. Walcutt, *Jack London*. See also Walcutt, "Jack London: Blond Beasts and Supermen," 87–113, and James M. Lundquist, *Jack London*.

37. Watson, 40. See also Roderick Nash, ed., *Call of the Wild, 1900–1916*, 1.

38. James M. Giles, 11.

39. Andrew Sinclair, 93.

40. Jacqueline Tavernier-Courbin, *Call of the Wild: A Naturalistic Romance*, 45. London admired how Upton Sinclair used animal imagery to make political arguments. In his review of *The Jungle* he observed that Sinclair's Chicago is "the industrial jungle of twentieth-century civilization," and *The Jungle* its "story of human destruction, of poor broken cogs in the remorseless grind of the industrial machine." It is "a book of today. It is alive and warm. It is brutal with life. It is written of sweat and blood, and groans and tears. It depicts, not what man ought to be, but what man is compelled to be in this world" (Walker and Reesman, 99). In contrast to the city, London saw the Klondike as a place where subjectivity could be differently actualized on the value-neutral landscape of the White Silence.

41. Tavernier-Courbin, *Call of the Wild*, 8–9.

42. Franklin Walker, 227; Dickey, 7.

43. Jonathan Auerbach, *Male Call*, 25.

44. Sciambra, 59.

45. Donna M. Campbell, "Slave Narrative."

46. William Andrews, 78–79.

47. D. Campbell, "Slave Narrative," 12.

48. Frances Smith Foster, 84–85.

49. London, *Call of the Wild by Jack London*, ed. Dyer, 103–04.

50. Philip S. Foner, 54.

51. London, *Call of the Wild* (1903), 16. Subsequent references are cited in the text.

52. According to Joan, Flora was addicted to Chinese lottery tickets (*Jack London and His Times*, 27).

53. Tavernier-Courbin, *Call of the Wild*, 45–46.

54. D. Campbell, "Slave Narrative."

55. Foster, 84–85.

56. Daniel Dyer, xxxi.

57. Auerbach offers a Hegelian analysis of the master-slave relationships in *The Call of the Wild* (*Male Call*, 225–26).

58. In an important study of *Martin Eden*, Sam S. Baskett identifies how London's projected self in that novel demonstrates Ihab Hassan's notion of "radical innocence" as a definition of selfhood ("Jack London: 'In the Midst of It All,'" 123–46).

59. Foster, 84–85.

60. "Nig" is also short for the French *nigaud*, a "fool" or "simpleton." The name seems to have been based on Louis Savard's dog of that name from Split-Up Island (Joan London, *Jack London and His Times*, 147).

61. Foster, 84–85.

62. Auerbach, *Male Call*, 237–39.

63. Fountain Hughes.

CHAPTER 3. MARCHING WITH THE CENSOR

1. London, "Japanese Officers Consider Everything a Military Secret," in *Jack London Reports*, 122. London's dispatches from the Russo-Japanese War are reprinted in this volume, and subsequent references are cited in the text as *Reports*. Note that because of the time it took to get dispatches back to the newspaper, most of London's dispatches were published weeks after they were written.

2. Earle Labor, Robert C. Leitz III, and I. Milo Shepard, introduction to *Letters of Jack London*, xv. London, *Letters of Jack London*, 427; subsequent references are cited in the text as *Letters*. On the *Siberia* with London were Robert L. Dunn of *Collier's Weekly* and Bill Lewis of the *New York Herald*; like him they made it to Chemulpo. London also mentions F. A. McKenzie of the *London Daily Mail* (*Letters*, 406n, 415n). Dunn, McKenzie, and London set out for Ping Yang (today Pyongyang) and the Yalu River on the Chinese border. At least one other correspondent was able to get close enough to action to cover the war, Richard Barry for the *San Francisco Chronicle*. Frederick Palmer describes London's coverage in *With My Own Eyes* (242).

3. The term "human document" seems to have originated with Edmund Goncourt and was used in a series of portraits of famous people published in *McClure's* edited by Sarah Orne Jewett, beginning in its first issue in 1893. The series featured London and other figures of the day, such as Alphonse Daudet, Arthur Conan Doyle, Thomas A. Edison, Oliver Wendell Holmes, William Dean Howells, and Jules Verne. London uses the term throughout his career, as when he wrote to George Horace Lorimer of the *Saturday Evening Post* on 27 August 1916 to describe the manuscript of a thirteen-year-old girl he wanted Lorimer to publish as "a perfectly naïve and spontaneous human document" (HEH JL 12506).

4. The works London produced around the same time, *The People of the Abyss*

(1903), *The Sea-Wolf* (1904), and *Tales of the Fish Patrol* (1905), provide racialized contexts for the Russo-Japanese War correspondence. *The People of the Abyss* focuses on Others who are not quite so "other," opposing the English poor to the American working-class, invoking both the germ theory of Anglo-Saxonism and the myth of the salutary frontier; London seems genuinely shocked by the state of his own ancestral "people." In *The Sea-Wolf*, the charismatic but doomed Wolf Larsen rejects his duties as a man to his race, keeping only to himself, while the formerly timid literary critic Humphrey Van Weyden, in contrast, along with poet Maud Brewster, stand for a Huxleyan ideal of humanity that practices, as Van Weyden tells Larsen, "the highest, finest, right conduct . . . benefits at the same time the man, his children, and his race" (68). *Tales of the Fish Patrol* collects stories going back to London's teenaged exploits among oyster pirates. They are focused not only on boyish adventures, but on race—the multitude of ethnicities and nationalities—Greeks, Portuguese, Italians, Chinese sailing on the bay, as well as other sailors from around the globe who made their way to California's rich fishing grounds. London has his protagonist rescued from drowning by a Greek fisherman, Demetrios Contos, just as London himself was so saved from drowning on the night of his youthful suicide attempt. Except in portrayals of "alien" Chinese, there is a sense in these stories of an international community upon the water, pirates and patrolmen who share a code of action that sometimes transcends race and the letter of the law.

5. John Higham, 111–12, 129.

6. Alexander Saxton, 1, 97–98, 244, 265. See also Higham, 68, 70–77, 107.

7. Carolyn Johnston, 7, 30–32, 92–93, 116, 119; see also Jack London, "Wanted: A New Law of Development," in *War of the Classes*, 222–23.

8. Higham identifies London's "wildly contradictory attitudes" as both commitment as "a radical champion of social justice for exploited and submerged classes" and a role in "forever glorifying the ruthlessness of supermen and master races" (172–75).

9. Quoted in Joan London, *Jack London and His Times*, 284–85. London later wrote to Toichi Nakahara, editor of the *Japanese-American Commercial Weekly*, which was published in New York in Japanese and English, on 25 August 1913, in answer to Nakahara's letter of 16 August 1913, which asked him, "We cannot hand down to our future generation a mutilated romantic relation between Japan and the United States. What should be the best attitude for the people of the two nations, irrespective of the California instance, in order to perpetuate the existing friendship?" London replied, "First of all, I should say, by stopping the stupid newspaper from always fomenting race prejudice." The races "are like unruly boys," who, one day, will grow up "and laugh when they look back on their foolish quarrels" (*Letters*, 1219).

10. To answer criticism that he wasn't directly involved enough in socialist politics, London wrote to the editor of the *Melbourne [Australia] Socialist* while in Sydney

in 1909: "How did I get my audience? I got it by writing those very stories. . . . Because I can tell stories about dogs and wolves and gold miners and ships and cannibals—all of which are unrelated to the tactics, strategy, and philosophy of Socialism, I can get a whacking big crowd to listen when I turn loose and talk on Socialism" (*Letters*, 796). Many prominent socialists were literary authors during London's day; London typed up quotations from many who inspired him and circulated them to friends. His literary socialist influences included William Morris, Wordsworth, Shelley, Robert and Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Lewis Carroll, Tennyson, Matthew Arnold, Oscar Wilde, Kipling, Longfellow, James Russell Lowell, Edna St. Vincent Millay, Edwin Markham, Joaquin Miller, James Whitcomb Riley, Swinburne, Andrew Lang, Sidney Lanier, and Whitman (HEH JLE 1286, subject files). He was drawn to idealistic visions of a happier future, a modern socialistic idealism awkwardly adapted to late Victorian ideals of progress. As Mark Pittenger notes, "this generation tended to embrace a Christian, teleological, broadly Spencerian view: if societies were essentially organisms that became ever more interdependent, then the trend toward organization and consolidation in American capitalism could be seen as a harbinger of socialism" (201–03).

11. "How Jack London Got In and Out of Jail in Japan," Shimonoseki, Japan, 3 Feb. 1904, *Reports*, 32. There are conflicting accounts as to how London got his camera back. His own version matches that of a reporter in the newspaper Osaka *Asahi*. As Eiji Tsujii notes, this reporter organized a group of newspapermen to restore London's camera ("Jack London Items," 55–58). Becky London's version is that "Daddy wasn't afraid. He talked to people and became buddy-buddies with the man in charge. He was out of jail and later rode the general's horse in Seoul" (quoted in Lailee Van Dillen, 38). However, Lloyd Griscom, a U.S. diplomat stationed in Japan during the war, tells his version: "One day I had a frantic appeal from Jack London. He was in jail; I must have him released immediately. Investigation showed that he, with his camera, had strayed by mistake into one of the fortified areas along the Inland Sea; and on my assurance that he intended no harm the Japanese released him." London returned to Tokyo, says Griscom, "sputtering with wrath because his valuable camera had been confiscated; he could not replace it; it was essential to his livelihood." Griscom visited Baron Komura, the foreign minister, who conferred with his legal adviser and refused to release the camera on the grounds that it had been used in commission of a crime and hence was state property. "'Does that apply to every crime?' I asked the lawyer. 'Yes, to every crime of every description.' 'If I can name a crime to which this does not apply, will you release the camera?' Regarding me doubtfully for a few seconds, Baron Komura replied, 'Yes, I will.' 'Well, what about rape?' Baron Komura's Oriental stolidity dissolved in a shout of laughter, and London got his camera back" (245–46).

12. Howard Lachtman, xiii.

13. HEH JLB 4.

14. Dunn's story opens: "Jack London is one of the grittiest men that it has been

my good fortune to meet. He is just as heroic as any of the characters in his novels. He is a man who will stay with you through thick and thin. He doesn't know the meaning of fear and is willing to risk his life to arrive on the freezing, storm-battered Korean coast." He continues: "I did not recognize him. He was a physical wreck. His ears were frozen; his fingers were frozen; his feet were frozen. He said that he didn't mind his condition so long as he got to the front. He said his physical collapse counted for nothing. He had been sent to the front to do newspaper work and he wanted to do it. London was absolutely down and out, to use the slang expression. He had to undergo medical treatment for several days. As soon as he was able to move about he and I started for the front" (Dunn, 1). Another correspondent, F. A. McKenzie of the *London Daily Mail*, recalled that London came to them "with the halo of adventure around his head. . . . On the days of our trip north whatever came (and we had our share of the very rough), his open, frank face never lost its laugh. He had to learn riding, and before many days his flesh was raw with saddle soreness. Then he laughed the more, even though his teeth were clenched, only insisting that we should ride harder, and himself hardest of all." McKenzie also remarks that London "is Anglo-Saxon, American branch."

15. A useful summary of London's movements is found in Michael S. Sweeney, 548–58.

16. Ethnographer James Clifford's focus on the way in which "ethnographic texts are orchestrations of multivocal exchanges occurring in politically charged situations" helps in reading London's Korean experiences: Identity, says Clifford, "considered ethnographically, must always be mixed, relational, and inventive," for "identity is conjunctural, not essential" (10–11).

17. London did not revise his manuscripts much, but in "The Unparalleled Invasion" manuscript there is a telling added phrase, shown here in brackets, to emphasize the deadliness of the West: "For it was these bacteria, and germs, and microbes, and bacilli [cultured in the laboratories of the West,]" (HEH JL 1349).

18. As he drew attention to the problems of interracial communication, London also demonstrated his facility in using foreign words and expressions. He compiled lists of foreign names for characters and explored the Korean language in detail (*Reports*, 44). He carefully prepared the exact words for his meeting with the powerful *yang-ban*, Pak-Soon-Song, by reading travel writer Isabella Bird Bishop's account of her own meeting with a *yang-ban* (*Reports*, 86–87). He learned from Bishop that he must speak with gruff authority if he is even to get in to see the nobleman. This he does, and the *yang-ban* invites him into his home and agrees to cooperate.

19. Richard Gid Powers suggests that London was influenced by Homer Lea's *The Vale of Ignorance* (1909), which encouraged "preventative retaliation" against the Asian threat (2290).

20. Eiji Tsujii also observes an important change of tone between the two essays

(Tsujii, "Jack London and the Yellow Peril," 98–99). And despite the stereotypes London used concerning Asians, he and other Japanese critics point out that he was very popular early on in Japan. During the Taisho era, from 1912 to 1926, when Japan was a comparatively democratic nation and intellectuals imported diverse ideologies, "How I Became a Socialist" was translated by Sen Katayama (1903) followed by numerous other translations, most importantly Tohihiko Sakai's translation of *The Call of the Wild* in 1917. London became a focal point for Japanese socialists in the States. (The Japanese consul in San Francisco felt called upon to explain to the emperor that London's influence led some Japanese socialists to place "impious" posters in the city on the emperor's birthday; using Darwin as taught by London, Japanese socialists claimed that the emperor must be subject to the same natural processes as other men.) London returned to prominence in the 1980s in comparing views of nature from Buddhism to Western ecological ideas. For this information I am indebted to Shinko Yamazaki, past president of the Jack London Society of Japan (unpublished letter to the author, 23 March 1999), and Sachiko Nakada, author of *Jack London and the Japanese*. Nakada points out London is still in Japan seen as "a socialist writer with much regard for the oppressed" (79–80). See also Haruo Furukawa and Clara Furukawa, "Sakaicho, Hona Asi and Hakadate," 1–2. New generations of Japanese scholars have found London suited to understand the Japanese in his fiction. Takaharu Mori even calls London a "Japanophile" (1–2). Today, the Jack London Society in Japan is second in membership only to the Jack London Society in the United States.

21. Quoted in Tony Williams, *Jack London*, 166.

22. Ibid.

23. During World War II the U.S. press referred to the Japanese not only as untrustworthy but as inhuman, with such terminology as "mad dogs," "yellow vermin," "living, snarling rats," apes, monkeys, bats, reptiles, even termites (James J. Weingartner, 53–67).

24. T. Williams, *Jack London*, 166–67.

25. Bill Moyers. From Admiral Perry's visit on, Japan was engaged in maneuvers to protect itself from what it saw as Western imperialism; expansion into East Asia was seen by Japanese leaders as self-defense (Marlene J. Mayo, ix–x). In 1855 Foreign Minister Soejima Taneomi rebuked a young colleague: "What kind of world do you think we live in? I call it a world where there is a struggle for power. Strong countries make it their business to conquer weak ones. . . . [D]o you think the great powers, who are as greedy as wild beasts, will decline to eat? In the West too only the scholars, a bunch of emptyheaded theorists, call for an end to war and aggression. Politicians and businessmen are not so impractical. To strengthen Japan by war is to show loyalty to our country and to our sovereign" (Mayo, ix). In the decade following World War I few Westerners considered Japan a menace, save unpopular voices like General Billy Mitchell's, warning as early as 1924 of an attack on Pearl Harbor. The Tanaka Memo-

rial, alluded to in Bronston's film *Jack London*, a scheme supposedly presented to the emperor by Meiji Prime Minister Tanaka Giichi, was called "Japan's Blueprint for Colonization of the Far East, 1927" or "The Grand Plan for Conquest" and was widely publicized in the West by the 1930s. Though evidently a forgery, it appeared in history books as a Japanese counterpart of Hitler's *Mein Kampf*.

CHAPTER 4. LONDON & THE POSTCOLONIAL SOUTH PACIFIC

1. London wrote his Macmillan editor George Brett, 25 October 1908, from Pennduffryn Plantation on Guadalcanal, "Just dropping you a line from the Solomon Islands." But his touristy tone would abruptly change: "[T]he Snark is a hospital ship. There was never a time when some of us were not sick, and most of the time most of us were sick. Fever was the principal affliction, from which none of us escaped. One of my native sailors, a Tahitian, nearly died of it, and incidentally was crazy for a while. The cook, a Japanese, from sheer funk over the general sickness and over the fear of being eaten by the natives, went crazy and left us at Meringe Lagoon, on Ysabel Island, where he remained over two months before he could get away. I don't know whether I told you or not of the book I had been thinking of writing, some time ago, namely, *Around the World with Two Gasoline Engines and a Wife*. I am now contemplating another book: *Around the World in the Hospital Ship Snark*" (*Letters of Jack London*, 754). Subsequent references to *Letters* are cited in the text.

2. A. Grove Day believed that what was wrong with London's hands was pellagra, "an ailment resulting from lack of certain vitamins and proteins"; the problem cleared up once back in California on a diet of fresh fruits and vegetables (*Jack London in the South Seas*, 156). However, the peeling could have been caused by contact with the corrosive sublimate of mercury or mercury chloride (also called mercuric chloride) London applied to his Solomon Island sores, or "yaws," and to those of other crew members. The white soluble crystalline sublimate of mercury is toxic, for once absorbed into the bloodstream it combines with plasma proteins or enters red blood cells themselves, tending to accumulate in the kidneys, where it can cause severe damage. When applied to the skin, side effects include swelling and irritation, hair loss, irritability, insomnia, profuse perspiration, dehydration, and even hallucinations and depression. In "Jack London's 'Mysterious Malady'" A. Bomback and P. Klemmer see London's chronic kidney disease as almost certainly due to his use of mercury on his yaws: "The substantial load of mercury London self-administered aboard the *Snark* likely caused an acute proximal tubular necrosis that was not entirely reversible; over the next 8 years, his gradually declining kidney function led to end-stage renal disease." As to his hands: "Dermal contact with mercuric chloride can cause a severe dermatitis with swelling and irritation" (466–67). In addition, recent research by Gregor Lawrence, Judson Leafasia, et al. suggests that a common streptococcus infection in the

Solomons can itself lead to renal failure. Charmian does record in her *Log of the* Snark that when she and Jack first got sores they also got strep throat (Roberta Wirth, "Jack London's Renal Damage," Jack London Listserv, http://www.jack_london@listhost.uchicago.edu.)

3. Charles E. Woodruff, *Effects of Tropical Light on White Men* (New York: Rebman Co., 1905), 353 (HEH HL 337220).

4. London, *Mutiny of the* Elsinore, 148–49. Subsequent references are cited in the text as *Mutiny*. London also read Woodruff's *Expansion of Races* with its ideas of the origins of "two races," the "long heads" or western races and the "broad heads" or eastern races (*Expansion of Races*, New York: Rebman Co., 1909; HEH HL 334777). In *Medical Ethnology*, which London also owned and marked up, Woodruff further elucidated upon his idea that "strong sunlight will cause a chronic eczema" in whites "so different from ordinary forms as to have warranted the names of European leprosy, Healthy Man's Disease and Biblical Leprosy," and he names London as an example (*Medical Ethnology*, New York: Rebman Co., 1915, HEH HL 336735, 144–45).

5. Jessica Greening Loudermilk, 13–14.

6. Woodruff, *Effects of Tropical Light*, 310–11, HEH HL 337220.

7. The 1910 episode is in Russ Kingman, *Pictorial Life*, 111; the 1911 lecture is noted in Mark Zamen, "Storm of Applause," 263.

8. Loudermilk, 15–16.

9. See Loudermilk, 16.

10. London, "Human Drift," 1–2.

11. Woodruff, *Effects of Tropical Light*, 125, HEH HL 337220.

12. Ibid., 267, 270.

13. Loudermilk, 18–20.

14. Lewis Carroll, ll. 9–32.

15. Jane C. Desmond confirms that at the heart of the demand for touristic "aestheticization was the 'ethnographic' gaze, a gaze which constructed 'modernity' by picturing the 'primitive' as its defining other" (37).

16. Gary Riedl and Thomas R. Tietze, *Cannibals and Headhunters*, 3–4.

17. Ibid., 4–5.

18. One of the first companies to set up production, Lever's Pacific Plantation Ltd., later Lever Brothers, was the model for the Moongleam Soap Company in "Mauki" (ibid., 6).

19. *Haole kama'āina* literally means a white person belonging to the land or *aina* and can refer to someone either born in the islands or a long-time resident.

20. See Jeanne Campbell Reesman, *Jack London: A Study of the Short Fiction*, 126–79.

21. Charmian London, *Log of the* Snark, vii; Joshua Slocum, *Sailing Alone Around the World* (1900). London named one of his yachts *Spray* in honor of Slocum's craft.

22. London, *Cruise of the* Snark, 5. Subsequent quotations are cited in the text as *Cruise*.

23. Charmian London, *Our Hawaii*, 183.

24. Martin Johnson, 68–69.

25. London read and annotated Hiram Bingham's *A Residence of Twenty-One Years in the Sandwich Islands Or the Civil, Religious, and Political History of Those Islands, Comprising a Particular View of the Missionary Operations Connected with the Introduction and Progress of Christianity and Civilization Among the Hawaiian People* (Hartford, Conn.: Hezekiah Huntington, 1847). Bingham sees the Pacific as "an open field, where Satan, by his varied malevolent agencies, . . . ruled and ruined generation after generation" (HEH HL 384864, 94–95). He marked passages dealing with *ali'i* (nobles), incest, and polygamy, the death of Princess Likelike, the drunken visit of Prince Liholiho to Oahu, and Hawaiian language, manners, and behavior. London also marked pages in Herbert Henry Gowen's travel book *The Paradise of the Pacific: Sketches of Hawaiian Scenery and Life* (London: Skeffington & Son, 1892) about Chinatown places and names, Hawaiian royal processions and funerals, as well as an anecdote that was the source for "The Tears of Ah Kim" (Gowen, 28–29; HEH HL 332496). More typical of travel books at the time was the ten-volume series called *John L. Stoddard's Lectures* (1897). In his pleasant and leisurely volume on Japan, most attention is given to places rather than the lives of the Japanese. Their customs or appearance are remarked upon only as picturesque: "The Japanese are naturally of a happy disposition. Apparently their past has no regrets, their present no annoyances, their future no alarms" (166). Emphasis is upon the consumerist enjoyment of the tourist. Everything is presented on the same flat plane, both scenery and the people reduced to stereotypes. In contrast to London's narratives, there is no curiosity about the people at all. Another book that contrasts with London's South Seas writing is Helen Mather's *One Summer in Hawaii* (1891).

26. Rod Edmond, 209.

27. Charmian wrote three books on their South Seas travels. Martin Johnson, formerly a jeweler's apprentice from Independence, Kansas, and later an adventurer himself, wrote *Through the South Seas with Jack London* (1913). Yoshimatsu Nakata also wrote in his memoir of his time with the Londons, "A Hero to His Valet," of his time on the *Snark*.

28. Johnson became a famous explorer in the Southwest Pacific and Africa with his wife, Osa Johnson, and was one of the inventors of wildlife cinematography. He made a career of exploiting white horror of dark peoples in a slide show he devised and performed for many years around the Midwest and in such films as *Congorilla* (1932) and *Baboona* (1935). He wrote to Charmian of his visit to the New Hebrides: "we found the Bush trives [sic] to be the most interesting people we have come in contact with so far, and I believe the nearest thing to a missing link there is on earth. They

actually dried and smoked human heads before our eyes, and I found the remains of a human head, cooked, and still hot on the fire, although the natives fled. We found Monkey People who are driven through the jungles by hostile tribes all about them, and they have taken protection in the trees" (Martin Johnson to Charmian London, 9 Nov. 1909, HEH JL 22697).

29. John Howard Moore, *Universal Kinship* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr & Co., 1906), 107, HEH HL 336819.

30. The cabin boy was Yoshimatsu Nakata, a Japanese youth who became the Londons' long-time valet. Later he became a successful dentist and wrote a memoir of his time with the Londons ("A Hero to His Valet").

31. Kingman, *Pictorial Life*, 189.

32. Charmian London, *Our Hawaii*, ix.

33. Vice president of the Hands-Around-the-Pacific Club in 1912 was David Starr Jordan from London's old Oakland days, who researched in Hawai'i his book *The Shore Fishes of Hawaii* (1905) (John Laurent, 492).

34. See Charmian London, *Our Hawaii*, 53, 87; Charmian London, *Jack London in Aloha-Land*, 47. See also Valerie Noble, *Hawaiian Prophet: Alexander Hume Ford*, 49.

35. *Kanaka* is a Hawaiian word for "man." It was used by whites at this time in Hawai'i in the same way that "a colored" or "a Chinese" was used, without particular prejudice.

36. Loudermilk, 23.

37. Quoted in Noble, 27; Noble 23–24.

38. Loudermilk, 7–9.

39. Percy Hunter, "Hands around the Pacific Movement," 403–05.

40. Alexander Hume Ford, "Jack London," 327. See also *Honolulu Star-Bulletin*, 9 and 16 April 1915, and the *Honolulu Advertiser*, 6 May 1915. For more of London's speeches, see Mark E. Zamen's collection, *Standing Room Only*.

41. Loudermilk, 30. Similarly, Zamen notes in his "Storm of Applause" that this newer theme in London's oratory, as well as in his stories of Hawai'i, "reflected a softening of his position on racial inequality; he may have ceased to be so enamored of what he had formerly perceived as the all-conquering Anglo-Saxon" (241).

42. London, "The Language of the Tribe," 117–18. See also Ford, "Jack London in Hawaii."

43. London, "Language of the Tribe," 118–19.

44. Ibid., 119–20.

45. Ibid., 120. For more on London's speech as an evolution of his racial views, see Daniel J. Wichlan, 3. A. Grove Day records a less-than-successful speaking engagement of London's in Hawai'i: "Invited by Thurston to give a talk to the prominent men of Honolulu, Jack delivered a fiery sermon on 'Revolution,' in which he preached the gospel of Socialism. His audience consisted of the sugar barons of feudal Hawaii,

who listened stolidly. Everyone knew that the time had not yet come when the families that had built the plantations and industries that formed Hawaii's wealth would yield to radical ideas and loosen their benevolent control of the island economy" (*Jack London in the South Seas*, 81).

46. Charmian London, *Our Hawaii*, 87.

47. Ibid., 88–89, 91.

48. Ibid., 87. See also Noble, 49.

49. Laurent notes one local newspaper report of 1906: "To discharge every Jap and put on newly-imported laborers of another race would be a most impressive object lesson to the little brown men on all the plantation. . . . It would subdue their dangerous faith in their own indispensability" (497).

50. Day, *Jack London*, 97. One of Stevenson's most memorable indictments of racism in the South Seas is his "Beach at Falesá" (1892), which Barry Menikoff calls "the education of a bigot" (57).

51. Charmian London, *Log of the* Snark, 47. Of the many writers who followed Melville to the South Seas, London seems to have been most conscious of his debt to Melville's *Typee*, recalling "dreaming over" it for "many long hours" as a boy: "I resolved there and then, mightily, come what would, that . . . I, too, would voyage to Typee. For the wonder of the world was penetrating to my tiny consciousness—the wonder that was to lead me to many lands. . . . Then came the rush of years, filled brimming with projects, achievements, and failures; but Typee was not forgotten" (*Snark*, 155).

52. Tommo remarks that Taiohae Bay is surrounded by "a vast natural amphitheatre in decay, and overgrown with vines, the deep glens that furrowed its sides appearing like enormous fissures caused by the ravages of time" (Melville, 36–37).

53. Martin Johnson, 164.

54. Juniper Ellis emphasizes how London "registers the connection between writing and obtaining an ideal Pacific"; as she notes, "Melville stands as a figure of the past Pacific that haunts London," for the "material Pacific" does not and cannot match the "already narrated ideal" (68).

55. See Greg Dening, *Islands and Beaches*. See also Edmond, 83.

56. Blair in Melville, xii–xix.

57. Melville, 26.

58. Ibid., 152.

59. Ibid., 244.

60. As Riedl and Tietze note, today readers try to work out the "proper and ethical relations that ought to exist in a racially diverse world population." They may feel that London "ought to have described" his South Seas characters "as behaving like noble, urbane Western sophisticates." But this view "betrays a racist reluctance to believe that these indigenous peoples looked, acted, and intentionally decorated themselves in

ways they hoped would enhance their formidable ferocity." As Franz Boas cautioned in 1928, "Courtesy, modesty, good manners, conformity to definite ethical standards are universal, but what constitutes courtesy, modesty, good manners, and ethical standards is not universal. It is instructive to know that standards differ in the most unexpected ways" (9–10). As to the evils of cannibalism, "To say that only white people ought to be held to an objective ethical standard is itself a racist statement" (Riedl and Tietze, *Cannibals*, 22–23). One misunderstanding of headhunting is that it was always necessarily carried out by "natives" for their own reasons; it was also encouraged by white traders because they could sell shrunken heads for a good profit to Western curio collectors.

61. For more on London and Melville in the Marquesas, see Sanford E. Marovitz, 2–7, 10.

62. Edmond, 208.

63. Charmian London quoted in "People: Nature Man," 3.

64. David A. Moreland, "The Author as Hero," 69–70.

65. Stranded for many hours with Captain Jansen and his crew on the reef, the Londons were finally rescued by Captain Keller when they bribed a native crewman with a fortune in tobacco to take him a note (Riedl and Tietze, *Cannibals*, 1–2). London recorded in a 1916 letter that one day when he was sunning on Waikiki Beach, "a stranger introduce[d] himself as the person who settled the estate of Captain Keller," who "came to his death by having his head chopped off and smoke-cured by . . . cannibal headhunters" (*Letters*, 1599). On the eventual fate of the *Snark*, see Charmian London, *Log of the* Snark, 413, and Martin Johnson to Charmian London, 17 Oct. 1917, HEH JL 8419. See also HEH JL 8438.

66. Edmond, 211.

67. London, "A Brief Explanation: [of abandoning the *Snark* voyage]," photocopy of autographed typescript, HEH JL 21258.

68. See also Porter Garnett, "Jack London—His Relation to Literary Art," 124–29, and "A Creator of Pacific Literature," 290–95.

69. Loudermilk, 32.

70. See *Letters*, 861 n.1.

71. Lorrin A. Thurston, "Jack London Takes His Pen in Hand" (quoted in *Letters*, 903 n.3). See also Thurston, *Writings of Lorrin A. Thurston* (1936). Thurston had long been a staunch advocate of white supremacy in Hawai'i and a strong supporter of U.S. business interests, as is made clear in his writings.

72. To the charge that he wrote nothing "of the brightness of Hawaii," London lists his articles (and later the basis of his book chapters) "The First Landfall, "Surf-Boarding," "Haleakala," and even "The Lepers of Molokai" as evidence to the contrary.

73. Jack London, Magazine Sales Record, HEH JL 934–945. These included *Collier's*, *Everybody's*, *Cosmopolitan*, *Success*, *Woman's Home Companion*, *Century*,

Harper's (three times), *Associated Sunday Magazines*, *McClure's*, *Saturday Evening Post*, *Appleton's*, *Sunset* (twice), *Youth's Companion*, *Lippincott's*, *American*, *Outing*, and *Pacific Monthly* (twice).

74. Ibid.

75. Lawrence I. Berkove, "Jack London's Second Thoughts," 60–76. See also Berkove, "Jack London's Developing Conceptions of Masculinity," and Riedl and Tietze, "Fathers and Sons in Jack London's 'The House of Pride.'"

76. See Edmond, 63.

77. Loudermilk, 35.

78. Christian imagery appears in much of London's Pacific fiction, some gleaned from his readings of missionary narratives. But the familiar-sounding title, "The House of Pride," comes from Edmund Spenser's *Fairie Queene* (1590–1609), the false paradise to which Duessa leads the Redcrosse knight. In contrast to the "House of Holiness," to which the knight is led by the virtuous Una, this is a fallen world ruled by the "Diall" of time and populated by the seven deadly sins:

> To sinfull house of Pride, Duessa
> guides the faithfull knight,
> Where brothers death to wreak Sansioy
> doth chalenge him to fight. (I.iv)

There are other possible sources: the fairy tale "The House that Jack Built," Edith Wharton's *The House of Mirth* (1905), and Matthew 7:26–27, "[E]veryone that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened to a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand," one of the handful of passages London marked in a Bible aboard the *Snark* (*The Holy Bible, Containing the Old and New Testaments* [London: Oxford, 1896], HEH JL 336704.) See David Mike Hamilton, 62–63. London's source should not surprise us: early on he read heavily in translated Greek and Roman classics, the Bible, and the Victorians and their literary ancestors. In 1899 he was rereading the Bible to begin his unfinished "Christ novel," which he worked on until near his death. He took *Paradise Lost* into the Klondike and from it he later adapted diction, imagery, and characters (see *Letters*, 1580); Milton's Pandemonium and its proud advocate, Mammon, are incorporated in the sulfuric imagery of "To Build a Fire." What is the road to Pandemonium, London seems to ask, but the seeking of Mammon above community with others and even above human survival itself?

79. Scott Malcomson has argued that London, looking for categorical certainty beyond class, thought he had "found one in an imaginary region at least as American as pitiless industrialism: race. . . . Life for London had to be a struggle; and racism, racial conflict, was full of promise," though it ultimately did not deliver "happy marriage of individual and collective destiny" (11–12).

80. London was annoyed at readers who identified him with Percival Ford: "These

people make me tired. If they'd only read what they think they're reading. Because I have a bloodless, sexless, misanthropic, misogamistic, misogynist disapprove of décolleté and dancing, and all and every other social diversion and characteristic, I myself am saddled with these unnatural peculiarities" (Charmian London, *Jack London in Aloha-Land*, 276). The name of his villain may have confused some and suggests some interesting revisions of Hawai'i's future: "Ford" was London's friend and founder of the Pan-Pacific Union.

81. Loudermilk, 70, 73. On London's use of King James English, see Dennis Hensley.

82. Loudermilk, 48–49.

83. London, *Complete Short Stories of Jack London*, 1458. Subsequent references are cited in the text as *Stories*.

84. Tietze and Riedl, "Saints in Slime," 64.

85. Loudermilk, 41–42, 45–46.

86. Riedl and Tietze, *Cannibals*, 7–9.

87. Ibid., 10.

88. Lawrence Phillips, "Indignity," 182–83, 186.

89. Riedl and Tietze, *Cannibals*, 13–14.

90. Tietze and Riedl, "Saints in Slime," 61, 65.

91. Ibid.

92. Riedl and Tietze, *Cannibals* 24.

93. For Tietze and Riedl, McCoy is "demi-natured" ("Saints in Slime," 60).

94. Tietze and Riedl, "Saints in Slime," 60.

95. Ibid.

96. Ibid., 63.

97. "Mauki" was anthologized in *South Sea Tales* and "The Chinago" in *When God Laughs and Other Stories* (1911).

98. King Hendricks, 24. For Tietze and Riedl "The Chinago" and "The Whale Tooth" show the absurd results of reliance upon an "absolute text." In both stories fatal misunderstandings occur when characters rely upon absolutes: "If 'The Chinago' provides us with an opportunity to see how inscrutable the West must be from an Asian perspective, 'The Whale Tooth' shows us how absurd—almost grimly comic—is the white effort to intrude into island cultures without ever attempting to understand them" ("Saints in Slime," 93).

99. Riedl and Tietze, "Misinterpreting the Unreadable," 507–10.

100. Riedl and Tietze, *Cannibals*, 162.

101. Earle Labor, *Jack London* (1974), 134.

102. James I. McClintock, 135.

103. Tietze and Riedl, "Saints in Slime," 60–61.

104. Kingman, *Chronology*, 93–94.

105. Martin Johnson, 329.

106. Charmian London, *Log of the* Snark, 445.

107. Riedl and Tietze, "Odyssey of the South," 3.

108. Bêche-de-mer, a variety of sea cucumber (genus *Holothuria*) eaten across South Asia and the South Pacific, often used as an ingredient in soups or stews, and a common item of trade, gave its name to the patois spoken by traders and fishermen. London devotes the entire chapter 16 of *The Cruise of the* Snark to this dialect.

109. Melville, 152.

110. Riedl and Tietze, *Cannibals*, 161.

111. Don Pizer, *Twentieth-Century American Literary Naturalism*, 5, 37.

112. Don Pizer, *Realism and Naturalism*, 28–29.

113. Riedl and Tietze see Grief as an attempt at a Nietzschean hero to make up for Wolf Larsen's self-destruction; whereas Larsen uses his power to dominate others, Grief displays "power to help others, at the same time that he . . . promotes his own financial expansion." Whereas Larsen and Martin Eden "were unable to shed the terrifying responsibilities of superiority," Grief represents "the easygoing ideals of the 'preparatory men' of Nietzsche's vision." Grief's altruistic acts "reflect Nietzsche's moral position of egoism in its most positive light" (Riedl and Tietze's introduction to London, *Son of the Sun*, xx).

114. Harry Stecopoulos sees Tarzan as "faithful to a highly individualistic, even heroic model of Anglo-Saxon bourgeois manhood." Edgar Rice Burroughs found "intolerable" the new standardized middle-class world and tried to "recover his sense of whiteness in an incorporated, post-frontier America" by producing adventure tales of disenfranchised but noble white men who regain their "rightful" identity as a way of "celebrating a traditional proprietary conception of white male identity in defiance of modernity" (what London would call the production of the "abysmal brute"). Yet Burroughs's uneasiness with his position as producer of popular culture and "his often eroticized representation of his heroes' racial cross-identifications" suggest that writing adventure romances did not so much resolve his crisis of whiteness as intensify it: "Dramatizing throughout his early romances the slippage between normalcy and fantasy, self and other, Burroughs appears to have taken just as much pleasure in dissolving white male identities as he did in fortifying them. . . . [T]he turn-of-the-century bourgeoisie used 'raced' popular culture to transform their anxiety over modernity into the uneasy pleasure of making and unmaking white subjectivity" (Stecopoulos, 175–78, 180–85).

115. Edmond, 143. The quotation is from Hughes, *Tom Brown at Oxford* (1861).

116. Ibid., 162–65.

117. The manuscript of "The Devils of Fuatino" shows several penciled changes that heighten the racial dimension of the story, such as repeated additions of the word "darkness" to refer to the islanders, or the term "white savage," to apply to their opponents (HEH JL 593).

118. Tietze and Riedl, "Saints in Slime," 65.

119. Clarice Stasz, "Social Darwinism," 139.

120. Also at Pennduffryn were Harding's wife, Baroness Eugenie, and Claude Bernays, plantation manager. The Londons were told to keep their revolvers loaded and with them at all times due to the numerous worker uprisings in the islands (ibid., 131). London's photographs also record hashish parties and drunken costume revels from this period.

121. Ibid., 132, 139–40.

122. London, *Adventure*, 1. Subsequent references are cited in the text.

123. In London's copy of *Adventure* (HEH HL 12697), there is pasted in a letter from George Darbishire of Penduffryn Plantation written from Sydney where he was recovering from yaws; it lists errors London made in reporting the environment of the Solomons and the behavior of the workers. Darbishire then reports on local news: "Since we left the Solomons, Dr. Deck has twice crossed Guadalcanal from the south to north side, on the second occasion he recovered the heads of the Austrian Expedition."

124. Berkove has noted that though the edition of Carl Jung's *Psychology of the Unconscious* London read and remarked upon was not published in English until the early summer of 1916, fifteen of Jung's other works were translated between 1907 and 1916, including two monographs. Criticism of Jung appeared in English as early as 1910. Clearly, "Jungian ideas had currency in the United States before 1916," and London's keen interest in psychology may have led him to Jung. London early on began to incorporate Freudian and Jungian ideas into his works (Berkove, "Myth of Hope," 203).

125. Charmian London, *Book of Jack London*, II:336.

126. As always, Berkove observes, London's intellectual development was "strikingly honest, . . . moving ahead sometimes haltingly by means of the process of 'second thoughts.' That is, after building a story around some idea that seemed truthful to him at the time, if subsequent reading, experience, or reflection caused him to have second thoughts about it, he would revisit the idea in another work from a different, even contradictory position. In other words, he used literature to test out his thinking, and see-sawed on ideas until they seemed honest to him and free from personal prejudice." Terms like "indecision" or "inconsistency" are "therefore unsatisfactory" in describing his "trial-and-error way of determining truth, especially since London's output shows definite movement toward liberal values" ("Jack London and Evolution, 252). Berkove also observes: "If Jungian archetypes and patterns are universally present in the human race, [London] seems to have reasoned, it can be argued that nature selected them for their survival value. London's last few—and obviously Jungian—stories dealing with the integration of shadow characteristics therefore result in individual human beings who besides being 'fit' have evolved ethically" ("*Before Adam*," 2).

127. Hinkle in Jung, xxxvi.

128. Charmian London, *Book of Jack London*, II:322–32, 359, 367.

129. James Kirsch, 152–54.

130. Loudermilk, 76.

131. Ibid., 87–88.

132. Ibid., 104.

133. Loudermilk, 90.

134. As David A. Moreland comments, "Ironically the Prince's journey into his past is his talisman into the future" ("Quest That Failed," 60). The landscape of the tale suggests the setting of "Koolau the Leper," as its "Iron-Bound Coast" resembles the Na Pali Coast of Kaua'i where Koolau died; Akuli and Ahuna pass an old leper hiding in the bush.

135. Moreland contrasts Akuli's bitter wisdom and stoicism with the customs, folklore, and beliefs that give meaning to his guide Ahuna's life (ibid., 61).

136. Loudermilk, 96, 98.

137. Charmian London, *Book of Jack London*, II:355; Jung, 233.

138. Loudermilk, 82.

CHAPTER 5. LONDON, JOHNSON & THE "GREAT WHITE HOPE"

1. Randy Roberts, 103. Roberts's biography of Jack Johnson is a balanced, scholarly treatment, and I have relied extensively upon it.

2. Ibid., 101–03.

3. Newspaper accounts of the fight quoted here are pasted in the scrapbooks in the Jack London Collection (HEH JL vol. 9).

4. Gail Bederman, 2, 41–42.

5. Hazel Carby, 4. Carby's chapter 2, "The Body and Soul of Modernism" (45–83), traces the career of Paul Robeson as "a black national symbol of masculinity" whose body became a surface upon which the nation's psychological realities were "grafted."

6. Dan Streible, 180.

7. Arthur Ruhl, 22. As Dana Nelson describes race as an "active metaphor" able to "inscribe and naturalize (as well as to subvert) power relationships" in the "contested site" of culture, she finds an "essential violence embedded in the very concept of 'race.'" In the Johnson fights the real battleground was thus not just physical prowess but whiteness, which either had to be overturned or successfully defended, depending on what side you were on (*Word in Black and White*, xi–xii).

8. Bederman, 4–10. See also Eric Lott's analysis of the "white obsession with black (male) bodies" at the turn of the nineteenth century, partially allayed by minstrel shows, indicating how "precariously" whiteness was lived (Lott, 3–6).

9. Gerald Early, 9–10.

10. Ibid., 11–12.

11. R. Roberts, 21–26. Some have described Johnson's seeming passivity in the ring, in contrast to the aggressiveness assumed to be a trait of white fighters, as part of the cultural phenomenon of a "black defensive style" related to the retort and defense maneuvers in playing the dozens. His "black defense" was a posture he could put on and then took off. Johnson's seemingly casual oral maneuvers were followed, eventually, by a sudden intensity of punching that ended the fight. (See also Lawrence Levine, 356–58, and Early, 27.)

12. Turn-of-the-twentieth-century British and U.S. novels had portrayed boxers as gentlemen of noble blood—for example, George Bernard Shaw's *Cashel Byron's Profession* (1886), Arthur Conan Doyle's *Rodney Stone* (1896), W. R. H. Trowbridge's *The White Hope* (1913), and Jeffrey Franol's *The Amateur Gentleman* (1913). In these books the "fittest" would always prevail, and fitness was synonymous with whiteness and moral virtue. The "good, white fighter," says Early, stood "at the brink of either an endless dawn of imperialistic lordship or the eternal night of nonwhite domination."

13. Johnson appears in a few other incarnations in London's works. Inspired by a bullfight in Ecuador on his way home from the South Seas, London made notes for a "Bullfight Story." An enraged bull runs amok in the bullring, killing numerous horses, three matadors, and "the Texas nigger." The notes continue: "Bull called Bonito, kills 40 horses Mention of kettle drums, bass viol Populace tries to kill bull—rurales turned in by governor—Killed by bull? How exp matador trained bull to run @ him @ a dead charge while he talks to a girlfriend, he nonchalantly turns & toys w/ bull—shirt tattered. After bull kills 5 men he really faces it & it kills him Chases & upturns a photographer & his equipment" (HEH JL 21311). Several elements of London's experience of Johnson are here: besides the bass viol, talking to a girlfriend even as a bull is charging him is a clear caricature of Johnson. The photographer and his equipment signal London's symbolic presence.

14. In contrast to the face of minstrelsy, which Lott terms merely "counterfeit" (Lott, 4), Johnson's smile was not easily answered.

15. "Caucasian's Plight."

16. Streible, 181. Howard Sackler satirizes the popular fears that accompanied Johnson's victories in his tragic play *The Great White Hope* (1968). In the play ex-fighter Cap'n Dan delivers a monologue that concludes, "[S]uddenly a nigger is Champion of the World. . . . [W]ell, it feels like the world's got a shadow across it" (Sackler, *Great White Hope*, 1:3).

17. Early, 41.

18. See "Booker T. Washington Meets Jack Johnson," 1909. Johnson's comment on Washington's criticisms of him was, "'I never got caught in the wrong flat. I never got beat up because I looked in the wrong keyhole,'" referring to the 1911 incident in which Washington was assaulted by Henry Ulrich for allegedly peeping at Ulrich's wife (*Chicago Tribune* quoted in R. Roberts, 149).

19. R. Roberts, xii–xiii, 47.

20. Ibid., 6.

21. Johnson said that he threw the fight in order to get back into the United States: "Willard was declared the new champion. I came out of the ring officially the loser, but not suffering the disappointment of defeat because I believed that I had done that which would enable me to return home and with the prejudices against me somewhat removed. My future would be devoid of the antagonism that constantly arose over my holding the championship title. As matters turned out, I had cause to regret my action" (J. Johnson, 70).

22. *Illustrated News* and *Australian Star* quoted in Richard Broome, 74–75, 352–53.

23. Sal Fradella, 41, 50. Fradella's volume features exceptional photographs of Johnson.

24. Robert Jakoubek, 45. This book also contains excellent photographs of Johnson and his milieu.

25. R. Roberts, 63–64.

26. Quoted in Broome, 356.

27. J. Johnson, 58. As W. W. Naughton wrote in the *San Francisco Examiner* on 21 February 1909, "Poor Jack [is] eating around the places they have high stools. . . . They don't like Johnson in Australia and they haven't given him an ounce of credit for demolishing Tommy Burns" (HEH JL vol. 9). Even London, who so clearly praised Johnson as the rightful winner in his newspaper copy, gave a speech in Sydney admiring Burns's "white" quality of being able to take punishment (Mark Zamen, *Standing Room Only*, 241).

28. For more on London's views of boxing at this time, see J. Lawrence Mitchell, 225–43, and Miriam J. Shillingsburg, 7–15.

29. London's fight coverage is included in *Jack London Reports*. Subsequent references are cited in the text as *Reports*. Not everyone liked London's work; the *Pall Mall Gazette* sniffed in an editorial on 28 December 1908: "If we had not known what powers of lyrical descant lay in the modern sporting writer we might have rubbed our eyes over a certain dithyrambic cable in this morning's 'Daily Mail.' Thanks for our contemporary's enterprise and vim, we get two columns from the novelist Jack London, describing the meeting at Sydney between Burns and Johnson. It was, as he would have us think, 'a joy to behold,' 'a remarkable display of inhibition,' a 'monologue, a lullaby, a funeral,' a 'kindergarten romp,' illuminated by the unmeasured coruscation of Johnson's 'golden smile.' The Negro 'with creditable histrionic ability played the part of a gentle schoolmaster administering benevolent chastisement to a rude and fractious urchin.' Bravo; the metaphor embodies just the kind of treatment Mr. London ought to get from Western critics like Professor Brander Matthews and Mr. Elmer More for these cow-like antics with the language" (HEH JL vol. 9). Brander Matthews

(1852–1929) of Columbia University was an influential literary critic. Paul Elmer More (1864–1937) was an American critic, educator, and philosopher who stressed the humanistic and ethical dimensions of literature.

30. The myth of London's racism in regard to Johnson continues to be perpetuated; see Ken Burns's documentary, *Unforgivable Blackness* (PBS Paramount, 2005), based on Geoffrey C. Ward, *Unforgivable Blackness* (New York: Knopf, 2004).

31. J. Johnson, 58. On the next page he speaks of his disapproval at Burns's and the white spectators' "unsportsmanlike attitude" and gives details of his receptions in Vancouver and San Francisco on the way home. He goes on to mention his engagements for tours and stage appearances, again sounding much like London with his hectic schedule (59–60). He also mentions London's phrase for him: "'The golden smile' for which I have become famous, I am told, never deserted me, and there was no reason why it should have" (63).

32. One would think the admiration Johnson and London shared for Milton would only be the stuff of an English professor's fondest dreams—that two men so different yet both masculine—would share an interest in Milton. In the popular press of the day, one man was the epitome of the white man and one of the black man, yet each had more in common with Milton's transgressive Satan than with the simplistic and raced "moral" categories they were offered. Milton's Satan fits the size of their imaginations and aspirations.

33. R. Roberts, 66–68, 118. Johnson wrote: "Rumors had come to me that there actually was talk of a chance shot at me if I whipped Jeffries. It was hinted that gunmen might be hidden in the crowd and that if my boxing opponent did not dispose of me a bullet would. I took little stock in this" (J. Johnson, 61–62).

34. Robert Sengstacke Abbott, editor of the *Chicago Defender*, an early African American newspaper, countered Hearst's sensationalism with a cartoon on his front page a few weeks before the fight, showing Johnson shaking hands with Jeffries. As Finis Farr describes it, "the front rows [are] occupied by men exhibiting a sign that read: 'JIM CROW DELEGATES.' The referee was a figure with the face of Satan, bearded and dressed as Uncle Sam, and labeled 'Public Sentiment.' He was saying to Jim Jeffries, 'We're with you this time—go ahead.' Ranged beside Jeffries were three menacing figures labeled 'Race Hatred,' 'Prejudice,' and 'Negro Persecution.' The legend above the cartoon was: 'HE WILL HAVE THEM ALL TO BEAT'" (Farr, "Jeff, It's Up to You," 69). See also Farr, *Black Champion*.

35. J. Johnson, 66.

36. Ibid., 66–69.

37. R. Roberts, 75–77.

38. On 29 November 1909, London wrote to John O'Hara Cosgrave, managing editor of *Everybody's Magazine* and editor of the *Wave*, that he had "tried to boil down

. . . the essential differences between the Spanish and Anglo-Saxon temperaments" (*Letters*, 843). See also Shannon Cotrell, "The Madness of John Harned," 3–6.

39. Jack London diary, 1904, HEH JL 594.

40. In one of its prefight stories on 27 June 1910, the *Dallas News* claimed: "Mr. Jack London's psychological analysis of Mr. Jack Johnson must convince any man that Mr. Johnson is a Negro. He is, as we are assured, 'happy-go-lucky in temperament,' 'easily amused,' altogether absorbed in the present moment, and therefore unmindful of the future. . . . He is Sambo made conspicuous by the unnaturalness of his environment. There is, though, some illumination in learning that Mr. Jeffries is quite antithetical in his traits and disposition. He is stolid, grim and saturnine, like the Teuton, Mr. London tells us, albeit his name suggests the inheritance of Celtic optimism. With the philosophical bent of the two gladiators thus fixed by a master psychologist, the outcome of the engagement next week ought to be of some educational worth in aiding us to determine the relative value of moods" (HEH JL vol. 9)

It's interesting to note the continuing concern with "Celtic" versus Anglo-Saxon. For London at least, things would get a lot more complicated—but London's presumed role as a racialist is clear. Robert H. DeCoy claims that Johnson barred white men from his camp: "Even Jack London had cried out with indignation. "'That black bastard won't let us in. He told his boys to sic dogs on us if we tried to get in. And he's got a whole carload of chippy-bitches and boozers in there with him. . . . 'Oh God,' London screamed, leading the others in a prayer. 'Let Jeff come out in the first round and kill that black, lowdown bastard with one punch please'" (DeCoy, 116). There is no identifiable source for this, and it appears in DeCoy alone, but what London seems to symbolize to DeCoy is quite apparent. Still, as London's coverage makes clear, he spent a good deal of time in Johnson's camp. On his part, while making the theatrical rounds in 1910 the champion posed for photos (with his white wife and entourage) outside a theater marquee advertising "Jack Johnson" alongside a poster for London's *Call of the Wild* (now in the National Archives and reproduced in the Roberts book). Johnson did exclude one white man from his camp, but not London: it was instead "Gentleman" Jim Corbett, Jeffries's chief tactician. Corbett responded to the rebuff with "'Take it from me, the black boy has a yellow streak, and Jeff will bring it out when he gets him into that ring'" (quoted in Farr, 68).

41. Joyce Carol Oates, 8–9, 26, 58–65, 77, 85–86, 97.

42. London's sports writing career had begun in 1901 with a contract from the *San Francisco Examiner* to cover a match by a German shooting club in Oakland, called the "Schutzenfest." This paid but embarrassed him with his Bay area writer friends. He wrote Anna Strunsky on 24 July 1901, that he had finished: "The Yellow is dead—at least for some time to come. For all I know, I may be doing prize fights next" (*Letters*, 250). "The Goths have entered Rome!" begins his first installment on 15 July 1901,

with the Teutonic common man as king: "In the days of old the mightiest muscle drew the longest bow; but to-day it is the finest and most delicate nerve that touches off the trigger. Brain has conquered brawn in the struggle for human mastery, and it is well that it is so." The Schutzenking, more important than the emperor, at his best, London seems to suggest, is like an author or artist: "oblivious to everything save the work he is doing. . . . In such exquisite poise is he, such delicate balance that he has become like a somnambulist. . . . This is the time for his friends to keep away from him and to keep everybody else away from him. And it is not too much to say that he would consider himself justified in killing on the spot a man who harshly aroused him. . . . It is perfect trim . . . . It is when in such condition that the artist, the man who creates with head and hand, produces his greatest, most enduring works. It is, to sum up, the condition when no part of the organism is unduly excited or unduly lethargic, but when an equable excitement has been communicated to all the parts, has elevated their pitch and given them unity" (*Reports*, 219, 226–29, 232, 249). Such a comparison between "creativity" as the province of both the rifleman and the artist conforms to Oates's model.

43. An entry in his Yukon Diary for 13 June 1897, when he is on the Yukon River headed for home, reads: "all along river asking for news—war—football, Sharkey, Jeffries. . ." (HEH JL 1447). Becky London recalled that after his hoboing, "Daddy wanted to be a boxer. The winner of a bout received $50, which was a great deal of money. He decided that would be fine, he was young, strong and healthy. When he saw a couple of stumblebums around the gymnasium who looked like punching bags he decided he would save his brains and make them work for him. He loved to box, and taught me how before I could walk" (quoted in Lailee Van Dillen, 36).

44. "Britt: Notes for Prizefight Story," HEH JL 492. Equating physical fitness with moral fitness, in these notes he made for a never-written story, he complains of "men who sit around at desks and chase the dollar with tremendous exercise of craft, deceit, & guile—& ride on cars, etc.—& who consult doctors for their miserable bodies' sakes—who hold up hands in horror at thought of a prizefight—& who complacently sit down and gorge themselves on roast beef, rare and red, and pursuit of dollar, will not protect the machines in their factories—and permit said machines to mangle batter and destroy out of all [annually?] thousands of workmen every year." In London's review of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle* (1906), he berates "Men who are fastidiously nauseated by thought of prizefight, but who, in refined & spiritual, & who calmly adulterate the commodities they put upon the market and which annually destroy thousands of children. Men who recoil at the suggestion of the horrid spectacle of two men confronting each other with gloved hands in the roped arena, and who clamor for larger armies and larger navies, for more destructive war machines which with a single discharge disrupt & rip to pieces more human beings than have died in the whole history of prize-fighting. . . . I prefer to have a man smash me full in the mouth

with his fist, than to have him tell a lie about me or to malign those nearest and dearest to me. These are the hurts of the spirit, & alas! They are so much more frequent than prizefights!"

45. R. Roberts, 108–09.

46. Streible, 176–77, 185–87, 189; Al-Tony Gilmore, 93; Bederman, 4.

47. "Pugilism is an Instinctive Passion of Our Race" (*Dallas Herald*, 7 July 1910) and "Prizefight to Be Literary Event" (*Hartford Post*, 3 July 1910, HEH JL vol. 9).

48. Joy, the Londons' only child, died within hours of her birth on July 19. As Charmian notes in her diary on July 4, reluctantly, London left for the fight because he had "pledged" to cover it; she, the nurses, and Eliza Shepard all followed the fight closely from the hospital room (HEH JL 224). London telegraphed Charmian: "I am in a dream so of course it never happened. In a little while they will call me and I will open my eyes and now it is July fourth and go out to the arena to see the real fight. This other fight is a nightmare." Jack London, telegram to Mrs. J. L. London, Fabilo Hospital, Oakland Reno, Nev., 5 July 1910 (private collection of Wayne and Peggy Martin).

49. Jack London, telegram to Mrs. J. L. London, Fabilo Hosp. Night Letter, Oakland Reno, Nev., 24 June 1910 (private collection of Wayne and Peggy Martin).

50. In an unpublished letter of 2 November 1911 to George Mathew Adams, London recalls "meeting up . . . at Johnson's training quarters" (HEH JL 10844). Other letters to F. H. Bartlett (27 Feb. 1913, JL 10966) and Hugh A. Bayne (7 Feb. 1915, JL 10971; 18 Feb. 1915, JL 10972; and 5 June 1915, JL 10973) also describe visits to Johnson's camp.

51. Farr, 73.

52. The "summer temperament" recalls archetypes of the sun in London's Klondike and Pacific fiction.

53. Jeff Jaeckle, 2–5.

54. Ibid., 4.

55. Joe S. Bain has praised the story's "consistent and clear" representation of the Chicano, showing "Mexicans and Mexican Americans in the present and future, rather than the past, and . . . figures who are more fighters and participants in an ongoing social drama than romantic lovers or idle bystanders," a Mexican American character who is not a victim but a hero. As he remarks, "No longer are Mexican Americans the amiable, contented ranch hands of an old California hacienda, as in [Helen Hunt Jackson's] *Ramona*, or the idle old men of a dying Mexican town, as are the Guadalajara residents in *The Octopus*. 'The Mexican's' Mexicans are Spanish-speaking people with a goal and a purpose," in contrast to Norris's old man Vacca, shaving candle wax onto the floor at Annixter's barn dance, the "silent Hispano, concentrating intensely on his carefully circumscribed role in a predominantly Anglo-Saxon society" (Bain, 115–16).

56. The Río Blanco textile mill in the State of Veracruz was the site of a famous massacre of striking workers in January 1909 in which dozens of workers were shot by government soldiers, an act that stiffened opposition to dictator Porfirio Díaz and helped propel the outbreak of revolution less than two years later.

57. Jack Johnson explains his success in Reno as the result of fighting "persistently and conscientiously. I had won all I had attained by sheer hard training, fighting and confidence in myself" (64).

58. Ernest Hemingway, 71–72.

59. Muhammad Ali quoted in David Remnick, 15. In the documentary film *When We Were Kings* (1996), Ali is identified as not only an American but a world celebrity and traveler. Africa was a revelation; he noted with surprise that they spoke their own languages, plus English and French, when at home Americans could not even speak English well.

60. R. Roberts, 229–30.

61. Ibid., 229–30.

CHAPTER 6. A "'GOOD INDIAN'"?

1. Sam S. Baskett, "*Martin Eden*: Jack London's Poem of the Mind" and "Jack London 'In the Midst of It All'"; Joseph R. McElrath, "Jack London's *Martin Eden*: The Multiple Dimensions of a Literary Masterpiece"; María DeGuzmán and Debbie López, "Algebra of Twisted Figures: Transvaluation in *Martin Eden*"; Young Min Kim, "A 'Patriarchal Grass House' of His Own: Jack London's *Martin Eden* and the Imperial Frontier."

2. See the long index entry in the *Letters of Jack London* under "*Martin Eden*, conflict of individualism and socialism."

3. Carolyn Johnston, 47–53. For London's epistolary defenses of *Martin's Eden*'s socialism, see Johnston, 86–87.

4. See Katherine M. Littell, 76–91.

5. W. M. Payne.

6. Several of London's works of fiction do succeed at being directly socialistic: *The Iron Heel* (1907), "The Strength of the Strong," "South of the Slot," "The Dream of Debs," "The Apostate," "A Piece of Steak," and "The Mexican."

7. London heavily marked up his copy of Wilde's *The Soul of Man Under Socialism* (1892, HEH HL 296713). Wilde argues that "Socialism itself will be of value simply because it will lead to Individualism," freeing humankind (by which he means artists) to pursue development of the self because no one will then have to worry about other people. For London, the idea of being both the socialist and "the man of culture" was attractive. He typed up the following quotation from Wilde and filed it after circulat-

ing it to friends: "Disobedience, in the eyes of any one who has read history, is man's original virtue. . . . Man should not be ready to show that he can live like a badly-fed animal. . . . No; a poor man who is ungrateful, unthrifty, discontented and rebellious is probably a real personality, and has much in him. He is at any rate a healthy protest. As for the virtuous poor, one can pity them, of course, but one cannot possibly admire them. They have made private terms with the enemy, and sold their birthright for a mess of very bad pottage." As Wilde insists, "Art is the most intense mode of Individualism that the world has known" (ibid.).

8. Jonathan Harold Spinner, 114.

9. Robert Barltrop, 180.

10. DeGuzmán and López, 99.

11. London, *Martin Eden*, 56; subsequent references are in the text. DeGuzmán and López, 100.

12. DeGuzmán and López, 100–101. They cite Bram Dijkstra's *Idols of Perversity* (1986) and *Evil Sisters* (1996) on the obsessive narrating of the Other. They also compare *Martin Eden* to other works of the period which attempt to represent the subject position of the Other, such as Gertrude Stein's *Three Lives* (1909), where "whiteness depends upon blackness and vice versa" (102).

13. Tietze and Riedl, "Saints in Slime," 59–66.

14. Anna Strunsky Walling quoted in Joan London, *Jack London*, 217.

15. Spinner, 118.

16. Johnston, 87–88.

17. W. E. B. DuBois, 4.

18. Andrew Furer, 2, 8.

19. Though *Martin Eden* may be the most complex story of passing in London's canon, he uses passing as motif often, beginning in the Klondike stories "An Odyssey of the North," "The Wife of a King," "The Scorn of Women," "The 'Fuzziness' of Hookla Heen," "Nam-Bok, the Unveracious," "Li-Wan, the Fair," "In the Forests of the North," and "The Story of Jees Uck." Later examples include "The Night-Born," "When the World Was Young," "South of the Slot," and "The Captain of the Susan Drew." For analysis of London's and Martin's anxieties about their celebrity images, see Jeanne Campbell Reesman, "Jack London's Popular and Political Masks."

20. DeGuzmán and López, 102.

21. Ibid., 100–01.

22. Before he reads Spencer, Martin reads a long list of writers, including Thomas Bulfinch, Madame Helena Blavatsky, Karl Marx, Adam Smith, John Stuart Mill, Arthur Schopenhauer, Immanuel Kant, George John Romanes, August Bekel, and, in literature, Kipling, Henley, Longfellow, Swinburne, the Brownings, Tennyson, not to mention works on other subjects from algebra to navigation. Post-Spencer, he gives up

these and other interests in Latin, algebra, geometry, and chemistry, choosing instead light novels and poetry in magazines, though he often starts but puts down unread even these selections.

23. "White mouse" and "whirlpool" are indications of how Martin is feeling at the moment, how trapped and reversed. Throughout the novel titles of his works or their publications reference race or whiteness, such as the journal *Parthenon*.

24. Charles N. Watson Jr., *Novels of Jack London*, 160–62, 164.

CHAPTER 7. "MAKE WESTING" FOR THE SONOMA DREAM

1. Charmian London, *Book of Jack London*, 2:241.

2. Ibid., 2:249.

3. Ibid., 2:249.

4. Russ Kingman, *Pictorial Life*, 236–37. Possum became a favorite pet and a fixture at the Beauty Ranch.

5. Ibid., 238.

6. An example is the exchange between London and former ranch guest and socialist friend, Greek-American Spiro Orfans. In the spirit of friendly criticism Orfans wrote to London on 15 November 1916 to complain that Pathurst of *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore "makes too much of his azure-eyed, blond-skinned Anglo-Saxonism," condemning British imperialism: "As you know I happen to be one of those brown-eyed, skin-pigmented sub-mortals and hell! you'll have to show me before I accept second place." Another letter of 24 December 1915 continues: "looking back into history we see that [the] more versatile Latin or Semite cousin nigh balances the scale in all fields of endeavor. . . . No mortal is readier than I am to pay tribute to your genius, your work and your personality. . . . But if for this I am to bow before every one of the blue-eyed, fair-skinned mortals, I'll say 'nix for evermore" (*Letters*, 1534–35). Orfans doubtless did not imagine what sort of reaction he would get. Instead of merely disagreeing on the interpretation of his works, as London had patiently done with correspondents in the past, instead of batting ideas around as he used to do, London responded with racial invective: "God abhors a mongrel. In nature there is no place for a mixed-breed. . . . Consult the entire history of the human world in all past ages, and you will find that the world has ever belonged to the pure breed and has never belonged to the mongrel. . . . There's no use in your talking to me about the Greeks. There are not any Greeks. You are not a Greek. The Greeks died two thousand years ago, when they became mongrelized. Just because a lot of people talk the Greek language, does not make those people pure Greeks. Because a lot of people talk Italian, does not make them Roman. The Greeks were strong as long as they remained pure. They were possessed with power, achievement, culture, creativeness, individuality. When they mongrelized themselves by breeding with the slush of conquered races, they faded

away, and have played nothing but a despicable part ever since in the world's history" (*Letters*, 1533–34). Orfans hit a sore spot by challenging London's myths of Greeks: the "Greek" friendship enjoyed with George Sterling, his sources in the *Odyssey* in his Klondike stories, or his interest in Apollonian sun-myths of Aryan racialism. London insists, "At the end of it all you have behaved toward me as any alleged modern Greek peddler has behaved toward the superior races he has contacted with anywhere all over the world." He concludes, "Get down on your hams and eat out of my hand. Or cease forever from my existence. Straight from the Shoulder, Jack London" (1545–47). London's command to Orfans to get down on his "hams" and eat out of his hand compares Orfans to a pig, not someone to strike "from the shoulder."

7. Also on this trip London reread Ouida's *Signa* and discovered that the version he read as a boy was missing its conclusion, in which Signa commits suicide.

8. Charmian London, *Diary of* Dirigo *Voyage*, 13, 18, and 19 March, 17 May 1912, HEH JL 208, 4–6, 9–10, 35. Charmian used her regular diary notes on the voyage as the basis for the manuscript, which she considered publishing.

9. Charmian London, *Diary of* Dirigo *Voyage*, 1 June 1912, ibid., 43–44.

10. Ibid., 15 June 1912, 53.

11. Jack London, *Little Lady of the Big House*, 219; Stoddard Martin, 63.

12. Martin, 52. Martin sees *Little Lady* as more successful than many critics, describing its development of "a modernist style which breaks more completely than London ever had before with the niceties and mannerisms of the nineteenth century, anticipating the 'hard and clear' precepts of Hemingway after Pound and the emphasis upon the external and visual which Raymond Chandler would hone to a fine art." It is a "realistic breakthrough" in its matter-of-fact style and rejection of romanticism. See also Bert Bender, "Jack London and 'the Sex Problem'" (52).

13. On London's need for a healing home, especially in California, see Earle Labor, "Jack London's Symbolic Wilderness." London's servant, Yoshimatsu Nakata, records details of London's ranch life in his memoir, "A Hero to His Valet."

14. Berkove, "Jack London and Evolution," 250.

15. London, *Mutiny of the* Elsinore, 389; subsequent references are cited in the text as *Mutiny*.

16. Though *Mutiny* was written first, London held it back so that, as Charmian put it, he could "follow to the end" *Valley of the Moon* (Charmian London, *Diary of* Dirigo *Voyage*, 2).

17. Joan Didion, 172.

18. Charles L. Crow, 1–2. Crow also discusses recent examples of back-to-the-land fiction such as Ernest Callenbach's *Ecotopia* (1975) and Ursula K. Le Guin's *Always Coming Home* (1985).

19. Crow, 5.

20. Ibid., 5.

21. Jack London, "Contradictory Teachers," 648.

22. Mark Pittenger, 499.

23. Charles N. Watson Jr. locates *The Valley of the Moon* within professional disappointments such as the play *Theft*, the never-finished *Assassination Bureau*, and the wasted investment in Joseph Noel's lithographic machine, the "Millergraph," during these years. It was not until the fall, when they purchased a new yacht, the *Roamer*, that the Londons found new peace in a series of cruises around the upper bay and Sacramento and San Joaquin Rivers. Again "at home" while at sea, London's "creative rhythm" returned in such works as *The Abysmal Brute* (1913), another boxing novel, depicting the negative experience of urban life and forecasting "a consequent retreat to the revitalizing airs of the country" (Watson, 187).

24. Watson, 187–88.

25. Ibid. 189, 194–95.

26. Ibid., 199.

27. Ibid., 200.

28. London, *Valley of the Moon*, 50. Subsequent references are cited in the text as *Valley*.

29. Ibid., 303–04. A reading of *The Valley of the Moon* as racist (with some incisive comments on *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore) is Alan Kaufman's "We're Saxons . . . and Not Dagoes." See also the chapter on *The Valley of the Moon* in Christopher Gair's *Complicity and Resistance in Jack London's Novels*.

30. In this phase of his marriage Billy suggests Mac's behavior after his marriage to Trina in Norris's *McTeague*, if in a lighter-hearted and boyish way.

31. Watson, 204.

32. Ibid., 203–04.

33. Crow, 5–6.

34. Ibid., 6.

35. Ibid., 6.

36. Ibid., 7–8.

37. London, *Complete Short Stories of Jack London*, 1320. Subsequent references are cited in the text as *Stories*.

38. Joseph C. Sciambra, 39; Paul B. Du Chaillu, *Viking Age*, 1:20, 25.

39. It is worth noting that Brett at Macmillan evidently did not read the racial content of *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore as irony: Brett says "personally I enjoyed that book greatly. The fact remains . . . we are a race, or a nation, for the most part of mollycoddles and these stories of the actual happenings interest, consequently, only a small percentage of readers, most people being unwilling to look facts in the face" (George Brett to Jack London, 26 Feb. 1915, HEH JL 3227). One of the only commentaries on *The Mutiny of the* Elsinore, still a very popular novel in Europe, is that of Russian scholar Vil Bykov (*In the Steps of Jack London*). See also Tony Williams, "Mutiny of

the *Elsinore*." Williams sees the novel as much more thematically subtle and aesthetically complex than other critics have observed, reworking themes as it does from *The Sea-Wolf* in the light of *The Iron Heel* in anticipation of ideas later presented in George Orwell's *1984*.

40. The agreed-upon basics of nineteenth-century travel narratives by whites include barbaric rituals, threats of death, physical suffering, and triumph of the European hero. Similarly, boys' adventure fiction, especially with colonialist themes, featured such elements as the difficult ocean passage, inadequate information about the destination, the advantage of European technology, nature and "savages" as friendly and ferocious, disunity within the expedition, comparison of the virtues of life in a strange foreign land with the idleness and corruption of the old world, and New World plenitude.

CHAPTER 8. "MONGRELS" TO "YOUNG WISE ONES"

1. Charmian London, *Log of the* Snark, 171.
2. Russ Kingman, *Chronology*, 159.
3. Jessica Greening Loudermilk, 76.
4. London, *Letters of Jack London*, 1298. Subsequent references are cited in the text as *Letters*.
5. Charmian London, *Book of Jack London*, II:323.
6. Ibid., II:324–25, 328. Charmian adds, "philosophically, and helped by psychoanalysis, Jack better and better understood and sympathized with human frailty; but temperamentally, due largely to physical and nervous breakdown, he became more and more intolerant under the torment of his uncovered sensibilities." He would tell her that everyone "has thrown me down," or that "It's a pretty picayune world, Mate." To this she would reply, "Do not think you are the only one who suffers" from the "petty shams of civilization. . . . So don't isolate yourself. . . . Be a *real* philosopher, and 'forget it'" (II:376).
7. Quoted in Joan London, *Jack London and His Times*, 339.
8. HEH JL 517.
9. Ibid.
10. Joan London, *Jack London and His Times*, 339–40.
11. Ibid., 340–42.
12. Johnston, 154–55.
13. Joan London, *Jack London and His Times*, 346.
14. Ibid., 345–46.
15. Carolyn Johnston, 155.
16. Ibid., 156–57.
17. Arriving in Galveston amid all the activities of transport ships and troops,

London was detained and refused credentials to board because military officers believed he had authored an anonymous antiwar tract, "The Good Soldier," published in the *International Socialist Review* of October 1913 and reprinted widely, including in the *Army and Navy Register*. London explained that the tract had surfaced before and that he was not the author. Richard Harding Davis pointed out, "'London couldn't have written it, because it's bad English'" (*Letters*, 1332–33). Following a cable from the Secretary of War, London was cleared to sail on April 25. His socialist comrades back home were angered that he denied authorship (*Reports*, 126–27).

18. Russ Kingman, *Pictorial Life*, 253–54. "Constitutionalist" was a name for revolutionaries used by anti-Huerta forces before the breakaway of Villa and Zapata; the name is thereafter used to describe the forces of Carranza and those who came after him. "Federals" or "Federales" is the name for government troops such as Díaz's or Huerta's.

19. U.S. readers' interest in London in Mexico was partly fueled by their fascination with the 1914 disappearance of Ambrose Bierce there.

20. London, *Jack London Reports*, 128–29. Subsequent references are cited in the text as *Reports*.

21. HEH JL 11458.

22. HEH JL 11457.

23. Joan London, *Jack London and His Times*, 350.

24. Turner quoted in ibid., 353. From Turner's pages London learned of the Rio Blanco cotton mill strike he used in "The Mexican." Like London, Turner is sympathetic to the common people of Mexico and critical of Díaz, but unlike London his analysis is not racialist ("barbarous" in his title refers to the behavior of the slave-owning classes). Turner argues that the Mexican worker is not as effective as the American worker because he is "invariably half-starved," and, if he weren't, could easily outperform the American worker. He points out that the best poets, artists, and scholars in Mexico have all been men and women of mixed blood (334). Mexico, he emphasizes, "is a wonderful country. The capacity of its people is beyond question. Once its republican constitution is restored, it will be capable of solving all its problems. Perhaps it will be said that in opposing the system of Diaz I am opposing the interests of the United States. If the interests of Wall Street are the interests of the United States then I plead guilty. And if it is to the interests of the United States that a nation should be crucified as Mexico is being crucified, then I am opposed to the interests of the United States" (339). How one wishes London, with his old fire and brimstone socialist speechmaking, had written this. Turner's book is a Mexican *People of the Abyss*—full of moving, individual stories of starving and abused people, lies, corruptions, and massacres (HEH JL 334755). See also Charmian London, *Book of Jack London*, II:294, and Johnston, 155–56. Unfortunately, London was reading another book at this time that

signaled a return to naive reliance upon racialism, Alfred Schultz's ludicrous history of the world, *Race or Mongrel* (1914), heavily marked by London (HEH JL 334748). That he read Schultz is a symptom of the same searching that eventually led him to Jung, but whereas Jung argues for "race consciousness" as that of the human race, Schultz fed on fears of miscegenation, "mongrels," and racial deterioration. For him, unlike Jung, there was no such thing as "man" as an abstraction; he had to be a yellow, black, white, or red man (293). See also Alfred Schultz, *Immigration Is Rigorously Restricted* (1914; HEH JL 332395), also annotated by London.

25. Kingman finds that London's socialism declined "in almost direct proportion to the gradual takeover of socialist reform measures by other political parties" of the Progressive Era (*Pictorial Life*, 11).

26. A. Grove Day, introduction, 18.

27. Carl Gustav Jung, *Psychology of the Unconscious*, 252–53.

28. Ibid., 262.

29. Ibid., 365, 391, 428.

30. Ibid., 330, 443.

31. Ibid., 445, 458.

32. Ibid., 116–17.

33. Hinkle, in Jung, ix, xiv, xxxvi, xli, xliii–xliv.

34. Charmian London, *Book of Jack London*, II:357–59.

35. Jung, 205.

36. Charmian London, *Book of Jack London*, II:322–23, II:353.

37. James I. McClintock, 337. As he points out, "London explicitly links Kohokumu with the most common natural archetype which Jung identifies with the oedipal myths—that of the sun (the hero and libido energy) setting (dying) in the sea (the womb) and rising in the morning (being reborn)."

38. London, *Complete Short Stories of Jack London*, 2484. Subsequent references are cited in the text as *Stories*.

39. For a detailed discussion of epistemology versus hermeneutics in this story, see Jeanne Campbell Reesman, "The Problem of Knowledge in Jack London's 'The Water Baby,'" 201–15.

40. Loudermilk, 100, 102.

41. Jane Murphy Romjue, 1–2.

42. Laura Makarius, 76–79.

43. Maui is the universal divine scapegoat of the peoples of Polynesia. As Katharine Luomala explains, "Thanks to him, they escape the weight of their rigid taboos. . . . They punish him for the crimes they themselves committed in inventing and recounting myths referring to a god who is not a god but who dares to defy the gods and ancient, atrophied conventions. . . . In other words Maui takes upon himself

the culpability of the group for breaking taboos for the sake of humankind, and he is punished subsequently for defiantly committing transgressions that corresponded to the secret desires of the community" (28–29).

44. See Nathaniel B. Emerson, *Unwritten Literature of Hawaii* (1909); David Malo, *Hawaiian Antiquities* (1898); Thomas G. Thrum, *Hawaiian Folk Tales* (1998); William D. Westervelt, *Hawaiian Legends of Ghosts and Ghost-Gods* (1915) and *Legends of Maui* (1910).

45. Westervelt, *Legends of Maui*, 79; Romjue, 2.

46. Romjue, 2.

47. Ibid., 2–4.

48. Ibid., 7. The *aumakua* belief means family ties remain in the afterworld and that spirits can return to scenes where they appeared when they were alive: "Keikiwai's spirit seems to return to this spot where Kohokumu encounters the squid" (8–10). See also Westervelt, *Legends of Maui*, 251.

49. Martha Beckwith, 455.

50. Richard O'Connor, 366–67, 391.

51. Day, introduction, 18–19.

52. McClintock, 337.

53. Earle Labor and Jeanne Campbell Reesman, 128.

54. Labor, "Jack London's Pacific World," 218–19.

55. Labor, "Paradise Almost Regained," 43.

56. London's credo is quoted by his nephew, Irving Shepard, in his collection *Jack London's Tales of Adventure* (New York: Doubleday, 1956), vii. Shepard was London's literary executor following Charmian London's death. A more contemporary source appeared in a news article that may have been Shepard's source. Journalist Ernest J. Hopkins had visited the ranch just weeks before London's death, and quoted the first line of the credo in the *San Francisco Bulletin*, 2 December 1916. Another document in London's handwriting refers to the credo; visiting Australian suffragette Vida Goldstein in Melbourne, he placed the following in her *Autograph Book* (the book is owned by a private collector who provided a photocopy of the page): "Dear Miss Goldstein:— Seven years ago I wrote you that I'd rather be ashes than dust. I still subscribe to that sentiment. Sincerely yours, Jack London / Jan. 13, 1909" (Clarice Stasz, "Jack London's Credo," http://london.sonoma.edu/credo.html).

57. Despite the historical record, some biographers and anthology editors still subscribe to the suicide theory manufactured by Irving Stone in his historical fiction *Sailor on Horseback* (1938).

58. Charmian London, *Book of Jack London*, II:396.

59. Ibid., II:395.

60. Alexander Hume Ford, "Jack London: A Personal Reminiscence," 119–20.

61. Ibid., 126–27.

62. On 26 April 2007, the day I finished the manuscript of this book, I Googled "Jack London" and received 28,100,000 hits. For comparison, "Mark Twain" produced 3,030,000 hits and Herman Melville 1,850,000.

63. R. W. B. Lewis, 5.

64. Joan London, *Jack London and His Times*, xiii–xiv.

65. London's introduction is reprinted in *No Mentor but Myself*, 154–56.

66. Ibid., 155.

67. London, *No Mentor but Myself*, 154–55.

68. As an example, there is Donna M. Campbell's comparison of London and Wharton in "The (American) Muse's Tragedy."

69. On Kerouac's reading of London, see Jonah Raskin, "Kings of the Road," which discusses the influence of London's *The Road* (1907) on Kerouac's *On the Road* (1957). See also Frederick Feied, *No Pie in the Sky*, and Joy Walsh, "Visions of Martin Eden as Jack Kerouac."

70. More or less alone among Hemingway scholars Peter L. Hays has examined how London influenced Hemingway, if not in questioning racial categories then in other ways related to the use of nonwhite characters and modes of discourse, especially in Hemingway's early stories "Judgment of Manitou" and "Sepi Jingan" (1917) (Hays, 54). They each used stories of war, boxing, adventuring, or other manly pursuits to show readers all it was to be an American. London's "macho model" also made "writing as a career seem less precious, less feminine" for Hemingway, with a style of "direct presentation of activity, . . . unliterary language, and use of vernacular." He adopted certain London mannerisms for his foreign characters, "along with exotic locales, frequent use of place names, foreign words, and unusual occupations." Hays describes in both "a preponderance of monosyllables[;] . . . the 'sequence of motion and fact which made the emotion'; the simple (not in the grammatical sense) action sentences; and the subtle repetitions" (Hays, 55–56).

71. Richard Wright, *Black Boy*, 248.

72. Ibid., 253.

73. Wright, *Color Curtain*, 203, 217. I am indebted to Bill Mullen for directing me to this reference.

74. Wright, "Literature of the Negro," 55, 63.

75. See Pearl Bowser and Louise Spence, "Micheaux's 'Biographical Legend,'" 73. See also Jayna Brown, "Black Patriarch on the Prairie."

76. Américo Paredes, interview, 223.

77. Paredes, "Nearby Places and Strange-Sounding Names," 130–38, 136–37.

78. Che Guevara, 7; Maria Josefina Saldaña-Portillo, 72–73.

79. The French exhibit was Jack London: L'Aventure et L'Ecriture, 24 Sept. to 30 Oct. 2004, Palais Ducal, Nevers, France (exhibit of photos, rare books and periodicals, and film based on book-in-progress *Jack London, Photographer*, Jeanne Campbell

Reesman and Sara S. Hodson—sponsored by L'Association des Amis de Jack London; Monsieur Didier Boulard, Sénateur-Maire de Nevers; Lycée Alain Colas; Madame Angie Bryan, Consul des USA à Lyon). The bibliography is Dr. Yumir Munkh-Amagalan, comp., "Jack London's Works Translated into Mongolian and Published or Prepared for Print in Mongolia," *The Call: Magazine of the Jack London Society* 14, no. 2 (fall–winter 2003): 8–9.

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FIGURE 1. Flora Wellman London in her later years.

FIGURE 2.
Virginia Prentiss.
Courtesy of the African American Museum and Library at Oakland (AAMLO)

FIGURE 3. Virginia Prentiss with Becky London. Annotated by Joan London.

FIGURE 4.
Bessie Maddern London, ca. 1900.
(Photograph by Jack London)

FIGURE 5.
Jack London and daughter Joan, ca. 1902.
She later became his biographer.

FIGURE 6.
London dressed in workmen's clothing to live on the streets of the East End of London, England, while writing *The People of the Abyss* (1903).

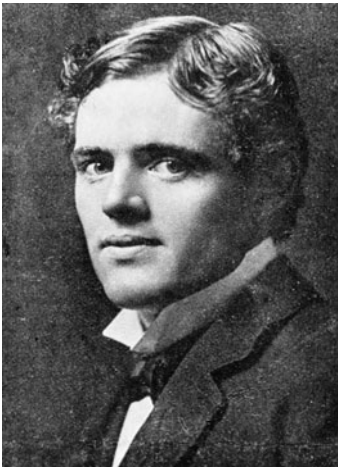
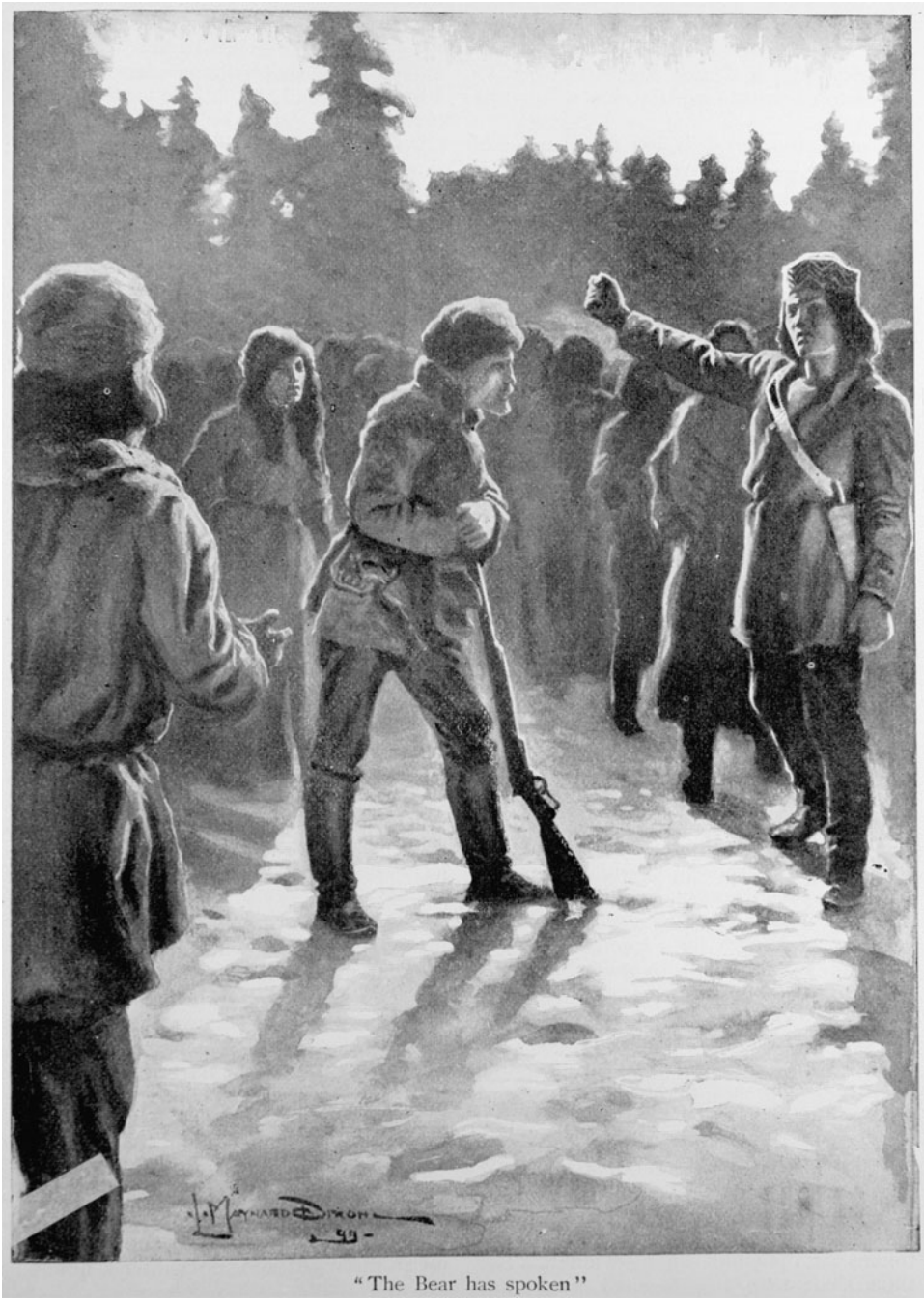


FIGURE 7.
London portrait inscribed by Charmian Kittredge London, "1900 Spring the day first I met him." London would have numerous studio portraits made of him over the course of his career, notably by Arnold Genthe and Annie Brigman.

FIGURE 8.
Anna Strunsky, ca. 1902.



"The Bear has spoken"

FIGURE 9.

L. Maynard Dixon illustration for the serial version of "The Son of the Wolf" (*Overland Monthly*, 1899).

FIGURE 10.
Frederick C. Yohn illustration for *A Daughter of the Snows* (1902), London's first novel.

FIGURE 11.
While London was covering the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 for the Hearst Syndicate, the Japanese temporarily confiscated his camera.

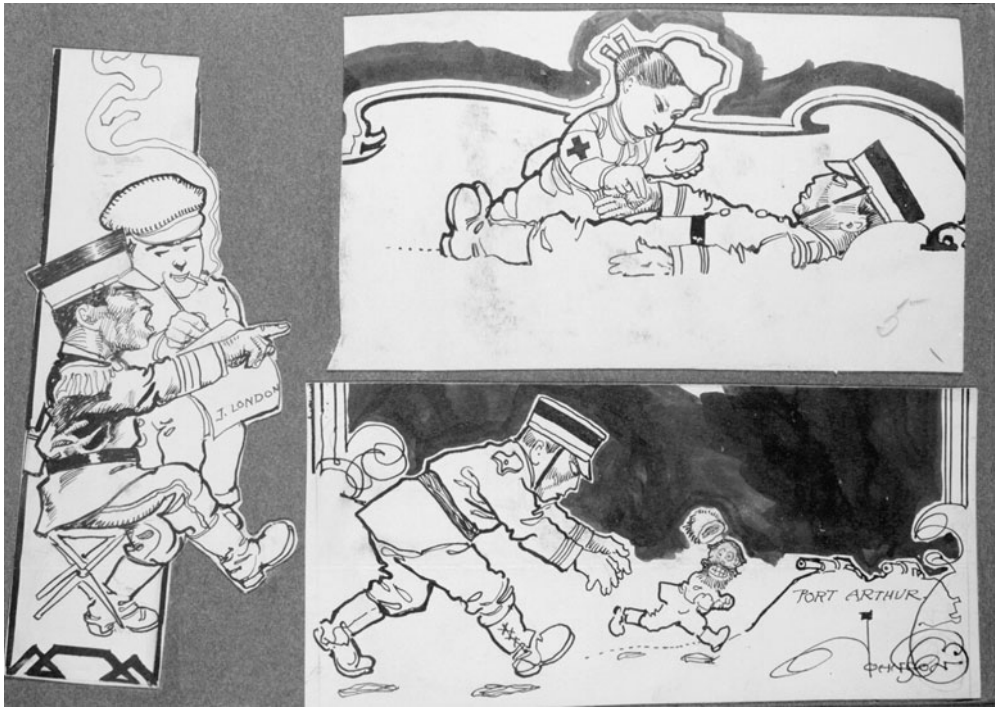


FIGURE 12.

Editors ran London's dispatches from Korea during the Russo-Japanese War above the top fold of the *San Francisco Examiner* and other newspapers, using elaborate layouts and often adding line art that depicted him. To readers, he himself was news.

(Page from London's scrapbooks, 1904)

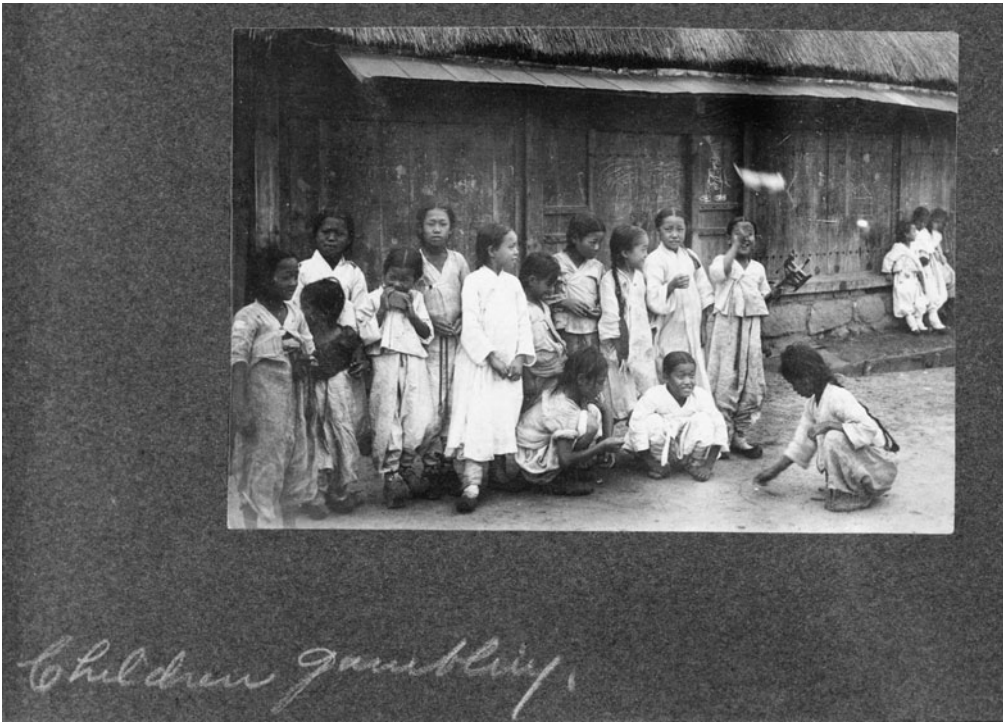


FIGURE 13.
London took numerous photographs in Seoul of homeless children, displaced and sometimes orphaned by the war.
(Photograph by Jack London)

FIGURE 14.
A series of London's portraits of elderly men in Seoul and in the Korean villages in 1904 reveals his sense of their dignity and their endurance in the face of war.
(Photograph by Jack London)

FIGURE 15.
Korean beggar girl carrying another child:
a portrait of the human cost of war.
(Photograph by Jack London)

FIGURE 16.
In another of London's portraits of war refugees in Korea,
a family struggles along the road south.
(Photograph by Jack London)

FIGURE 17.

Lobby card for the film *Jack London* (1943), starring Michael O'Shea.

Courtesy Sonoma State University Library.

SAMUEL BRONSTON
presents
MICHAEL O'SHEA
SUSAN HAYWARD
in
JACK LONDON
with OSA MASSEN
HARRY DAVENPORT
FRANK CRAVEN
VIRGINIA MAYO
RALPH MORGAN
LOUISE BEAVERS
Screen Play by ERNEST PASCAL
Directed by ALFRED SANTELL
A SAMUEL BRONSTON
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FIGURE 18.

Lobby card for the film *Jack London* (1943); here "Captain Tanaka" shows "Jack London" Japan's plans for world domination.

Courtesy Sonoma State University Library.

FIGURE 19.
Studio portrait of
Charmian Kittredge around the
time she met Jack London,
ca. 1900.

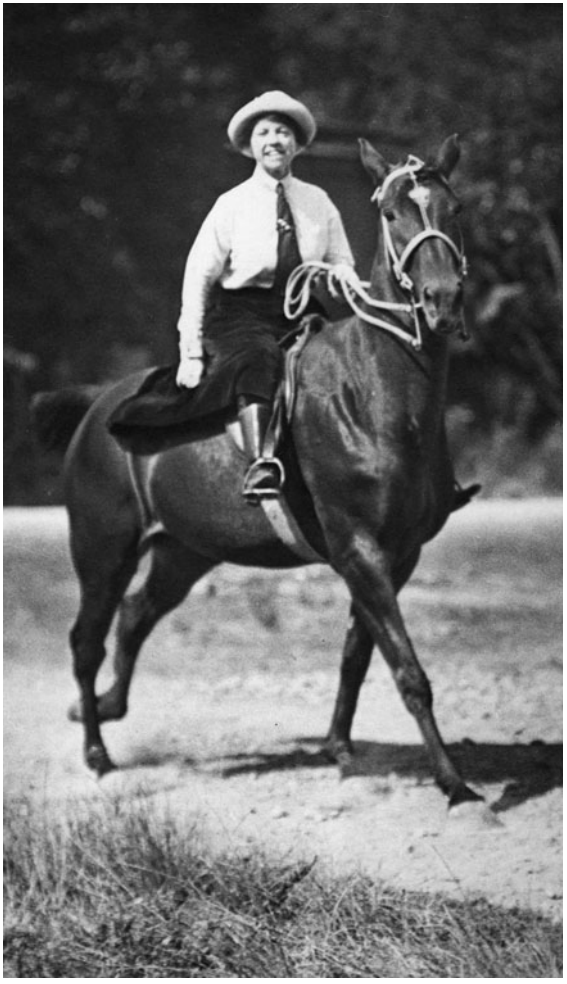


FIGURE 20.
Charmian London was one of
the first women in California to
ride astride; her athleticism
appealed to London,
as did her healthy, outdoor way
of life in Sonoma Valley.
(Photograph by Jack London)

FIGURE 21.
Captioned by Charmian in a photo album "Mrs. Thurston and 'Her' Family," this 1907 photo includes Lorrin A. Thurston, the publisher of the *Honolulu Advertiser*. First London's friend and then a foe, he objected to the writer's portrayal of the field-workers of Hawai'i as oppressed and to London's stories about lepers.
(Photograph by Jack London)

FIGURE 22. On June 27–28, 1907, the Londons embarked on an automobile trip around Oahu planned by Alexander Hume Ford. Charmian annotated the album page of this photograph of some of the travelers: "Mr. Kenton Manager Trip around Ewa Plantation" (far left), "Mr. Ries from South Africa" (center left), and "Alex. Hume Ford" (middle right). London's observations of the plight of the Chinese, Japanese, and Portuguese field-workers led him to write stories critical of Hawai'i's powerful landowning class, beginning with "The House of Pride."

FIGURE 23.
London photographed the field-workers of Ewa Plantation and their families. This one Charmian annotated as "Portuguese on a great Sugar Plantation," June 1907.
(Photograph by Jack London)

FIGURE 24.
"Pa'u Riders," or trick rodeo riders, performed at the 1907 Fourth of July celebration at the leper colony of Kalaupapa, Moloka'i.
(Photograph by Jack London)

FIGURE 25. London photographed leper children at Kalaupapa, as in this seaside scene, July 1907.
(Photograph by Jack London)

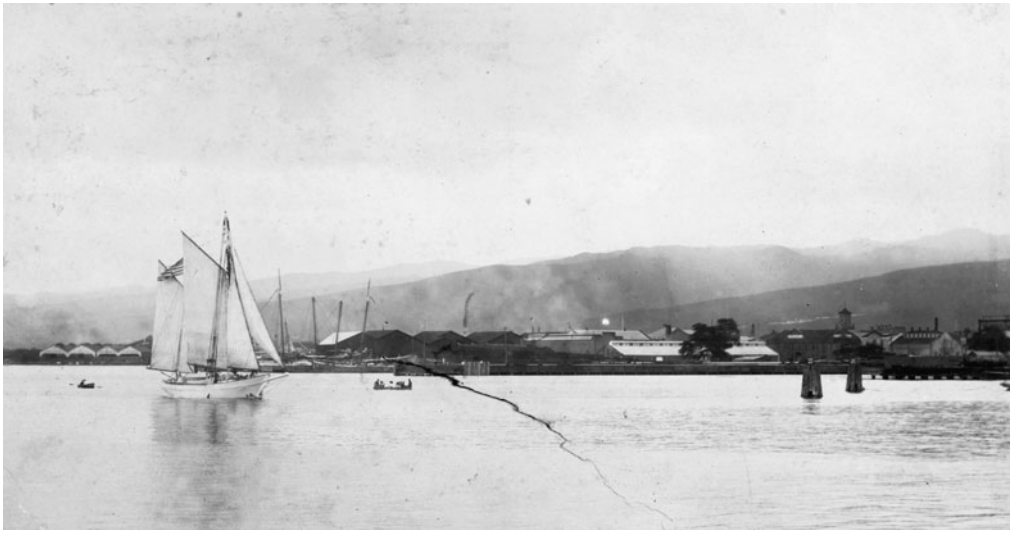


FIGURE 26.
As inscribed by Charmian, "The Snark in Honolulu 1907, Leaving for Hilo and South Seas," the photo shows the *Snark* as she began a sixty-day voyage to the Marquesas Islands.

FIGURE 27.
The crew of the *Snark* took turns spear-fishing for their dinner—here London tries his hand (1907).

FIGURE 28.
Yoshimatsu Nakata at the wheel of the *Roamer*, ca. 1914. On September 28, 1907, in Honolulu, London hired Nakata as a new valet; he became an invaluable part of the *Snark* crew, returning with the Londons to Glen Ellen after the voyage. He also accompanied them on their 1912 *Dirigo* voyage.
(Photograph by Jack London)

FIGURE 29.
Charmian annotated this 1907 photograph "Melville's Typee Valley," but, like her husband, realized that they had arrived there "too late," as they observed the handful of inhabitants remaining of the thousands Melville described fifty years earlier, dying from diseases brought in by whites.
(Photograph by Jack London)

FIGURE 30. Pasted in a photo album by Charmian and labeled by her as "Fijians weaving," this postcard exemplifies the genre that portrayed women of the South Seas as exotic and topless and posed them indoors at a service activity, such as food preparation. London avoided these clichéd, artificial poses and photographed islanders as they went about their daily activities.

FIGURE 31. Male South Sea islanders were most often portrayed by European and U.S. photographers as either ethnographic "specimens" or as diseased. London departed from the standard "scientific" poses of Oceanic people, such as this photograph of a male leper revealing his disfigurement.

FIGURE 32.
Marquesan youth, 1907, annotated by Charmian "A Prince of Polynesia." In this and figure 35, London's naturalistic and humane sense of his subject contrasts with the accepted views of "natives."
(Photograph by Jack London)

FIGURE 33. Three Marquesan men.
(Photograph by Jack London)

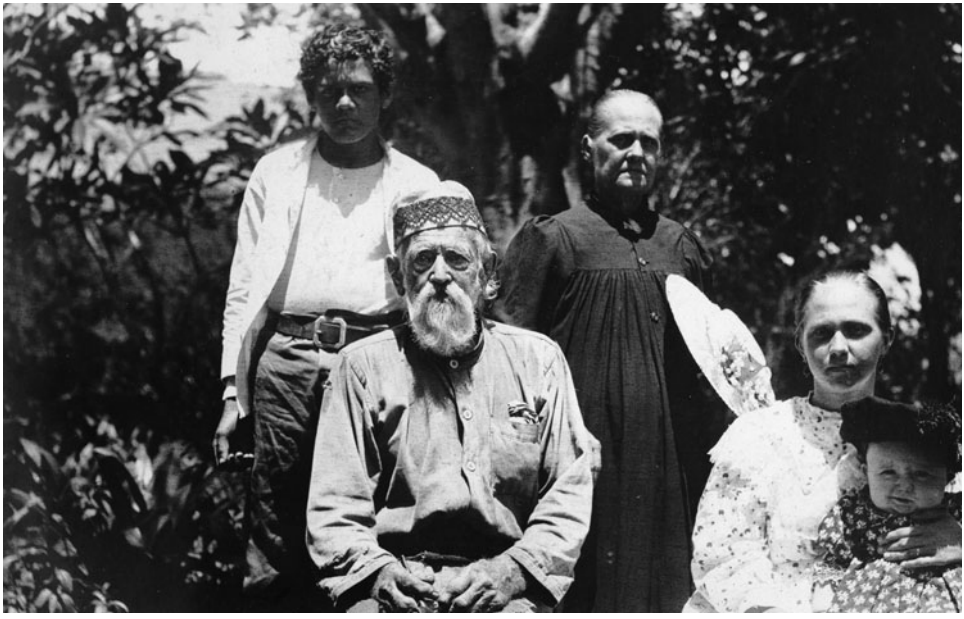


FIGURE 34.
Charmian annotated this photograph as "Stevenson's pilot thro' Paumotus," "Herr Goelz," and "Mrs. Fisher." Goelz was Robert Louis Stevenson's pilot when he visited the Marquesas, and Mrs. Fisher his landlady, as she was for the Londons while they stayed in Tahioae on Nuku Hiva in 1907.
(Photograph by Jack London)

FIGURE 35.
Ernest Darling aboard the *Snark*, 1907. Described as "Nature Man" by London in *The Cruise of the* Snark, Darling was an inspiring if doomed "back-to-nature" figure for London in Tahiti, expelled from the island by the French authorities for his socialism.
(Photograph by Jack London)

FIGURE 36.
Charmian called the subject of this photograph "Helen of Raiatea," 1908.
(Photograph by Jack London)

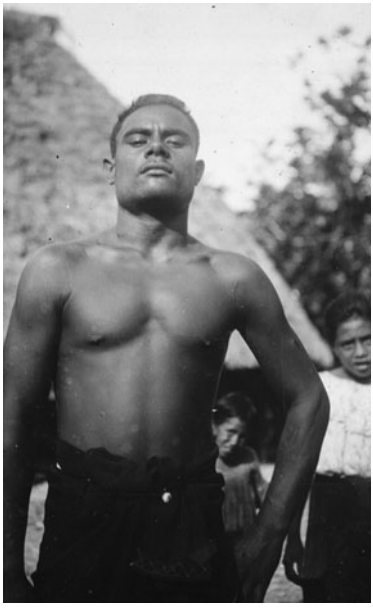
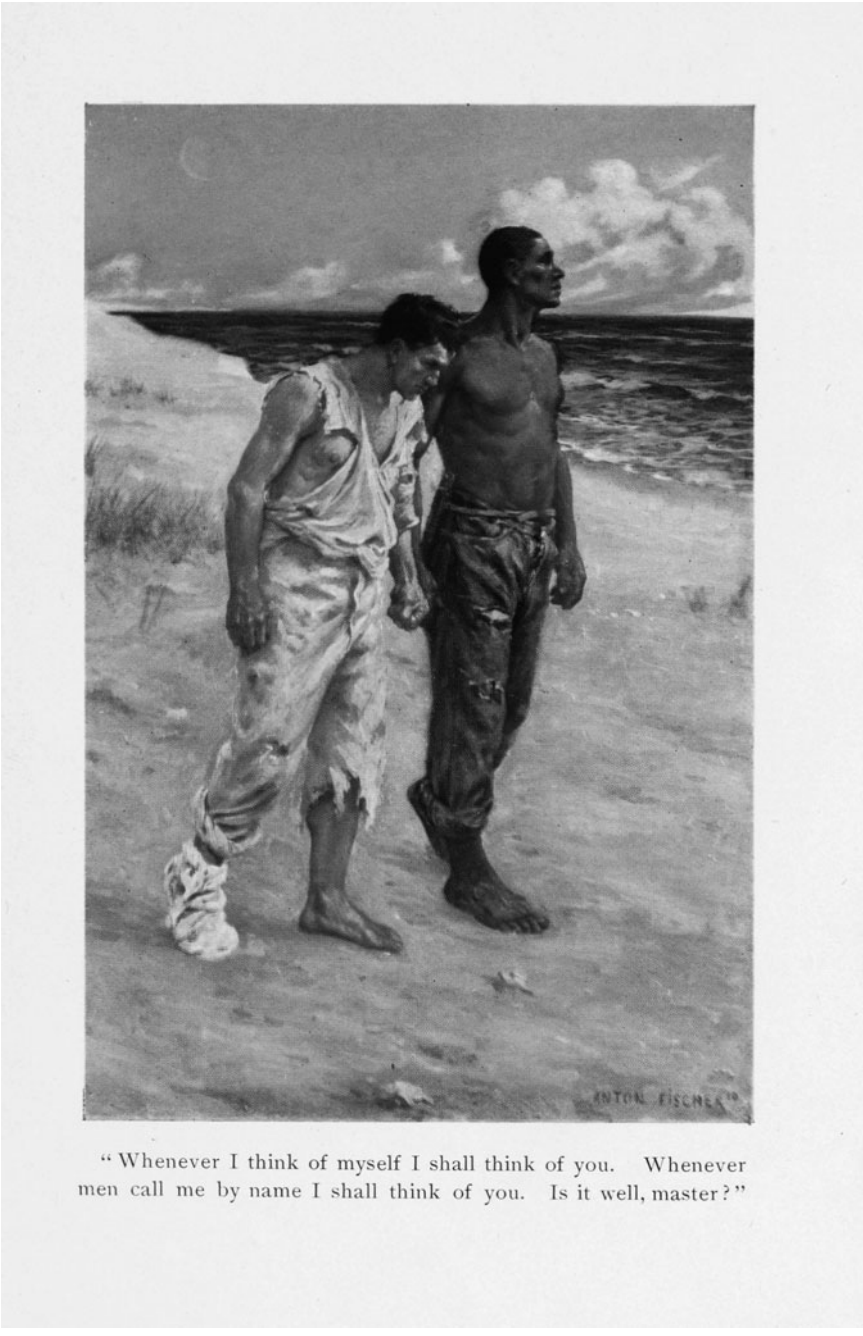


FIGURE 37.
Of this proud Samoan, Charmian noted, "Oh He Had Been on a Man 'O War, He Had," 1908.
(Photograph by Jack London)

FIGURE 38.
Samoan youth with club, 1908.
(Photograph by Jack London)



"Whenever I think of myself I shall think of you. Whenever men call me by name I shall think of you. Is it well, master?"

FIGURE 39.
Anton Fischer frontispiece to *South Sea Tales* (1911) depicting Charley and Otoo of London's "The Heathen." The artist has Africanized the supposed Tahitian, Otoo, and depicts him assisting his "master."

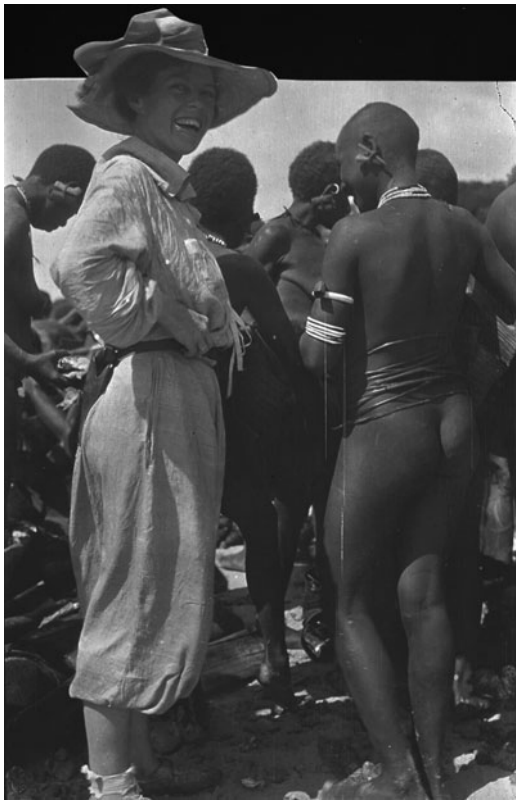


FIGURE 40.
This photograph of Charmian London at the women's market on the Solomon Island of Malaita, 1908, captioned in the album "Some wild women Charmian their first white woman," caused controversy between London and both *Woman's Home Companion* and Macmillan. The publishers refused to print the photo because a white woman is in the frame with naked villagers and does not seem to notice. Note Charmian's revolver and the bandage over the Solomon Island sores on her leg.
(Photograph by Jack London)

FIGURE 41.
A New Hebrides family proudly shows off their wealth, including tobacco leaves in the foreground.
(Photograph by Jack London. Reproduced courtesy of California State Parks.)

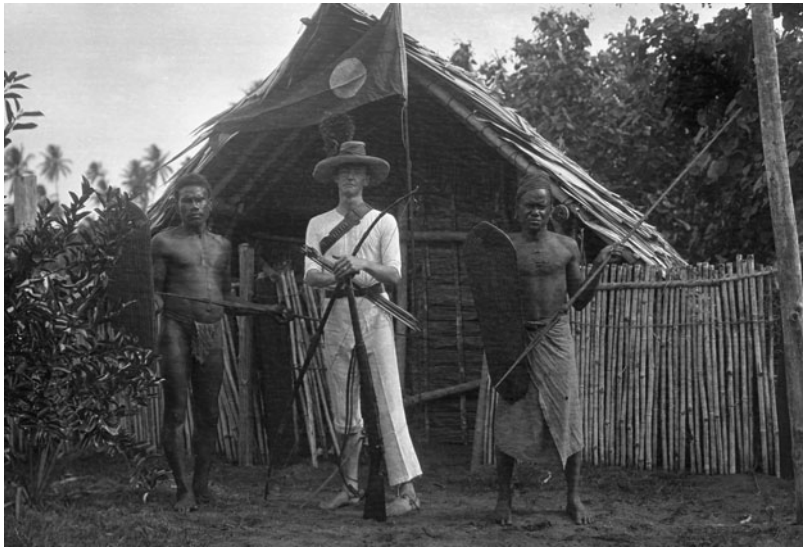


FIGURE 42. George Darbishire was one of the partners on Pennduffryn, a copra plantation on Guadalcanal in the Solomons where the Londons stayed for five months in 1908. In several photographs London uses the sharp contrast of black and white to indicate the racial roles of master and workers.
(Photograph by Jack London)

FIGURE 43. Charmian annotated this photograph "In the Gilbert's George Darbishire and his wife Helen Darby died 1914." Her words referred to the news the Londons later received that Darbishire had been cannibalized by his workers.
(Photograph by Jack London)

FIGURE 44. On October 28, 1908, the Pennduffryn masters Darbishire—who was known for donning Charmian's clothing when he got drunk or high on hashish—(far left) and Tom Harding (far right), the Baroness Eugenie (sitting next to Darbishire), the Londons (front between the Baroness and Harding), and the *Snark* crew (back row, right, Martin Johnson and Yoshimatsu Nakata) had a costume party. London and Charmian are dressed as an organ grinder and an invalid, the latter especially appropriate to the diseases the crew suffered in the Solomons.

FIGURE 45. In August 1908 the Londons sailed aboard the *Minota*, a slave ship operated by Captain Jansen and his hard-bitten crew, which was attacked by islanders at Malu on Malaita. Intervention by the *Eugenie*, commanded by Captain Keller, and by the local missionary prevented the *Minota* from being overrun. Captain Jansen holds Peggy, whom Charmian "rescued" from the ship and adopted.

(Photograph by Jack London)

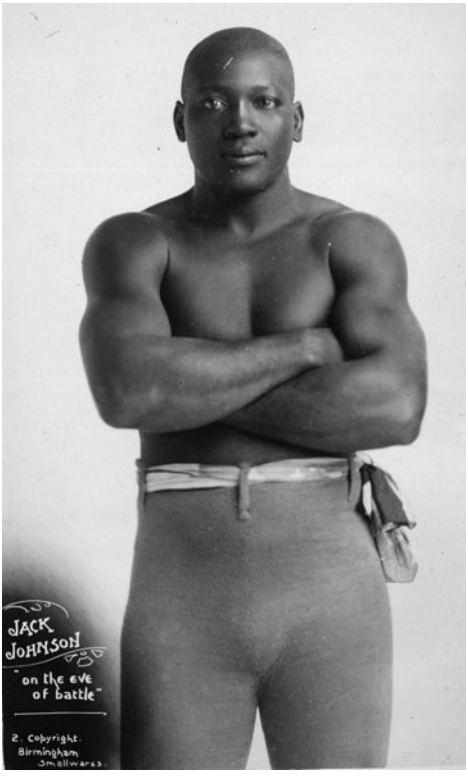


FIGURE 46.
Jack Johnson publicity photograph.
(© Birmingham Small Wares, 1908.)

FIGURE 47.
London's photographs, like this one annotated by Charmian, "Melbourne, Australia, 1908," often ran in newspapers alongside Johnson's photo during the buildup to the 1908 and 1910 world heavyweight fights instead of Burns's and Jeffries's.

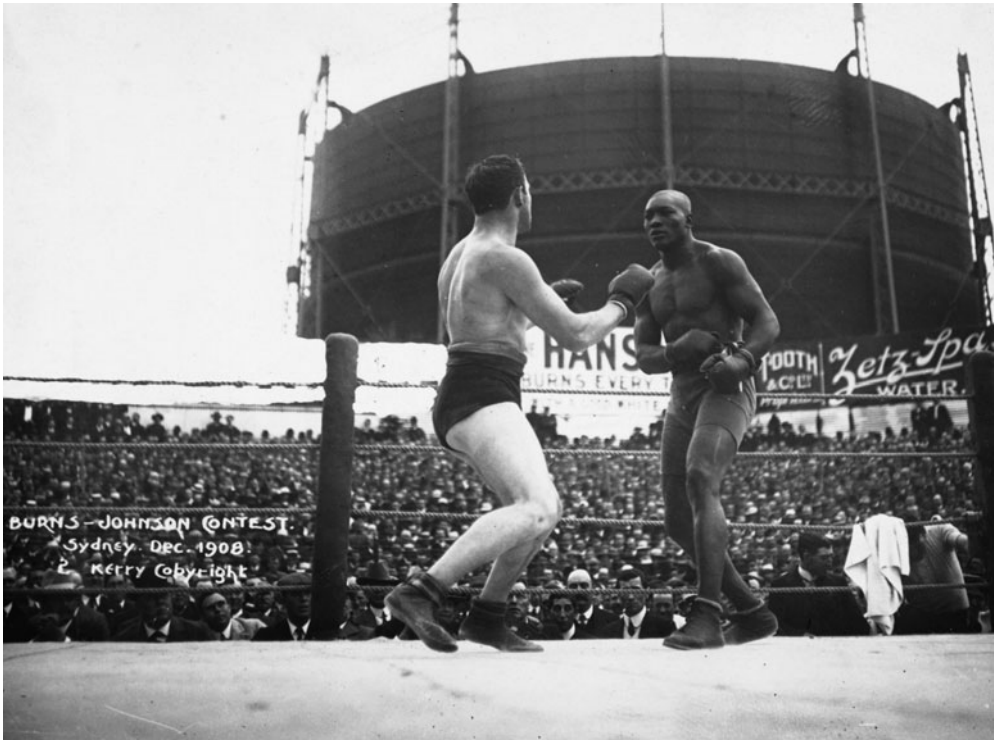


FIGURE 48.
Jack Johnson and Tommy Burns world heavyweight fight in Sydney, December 26, 1908.

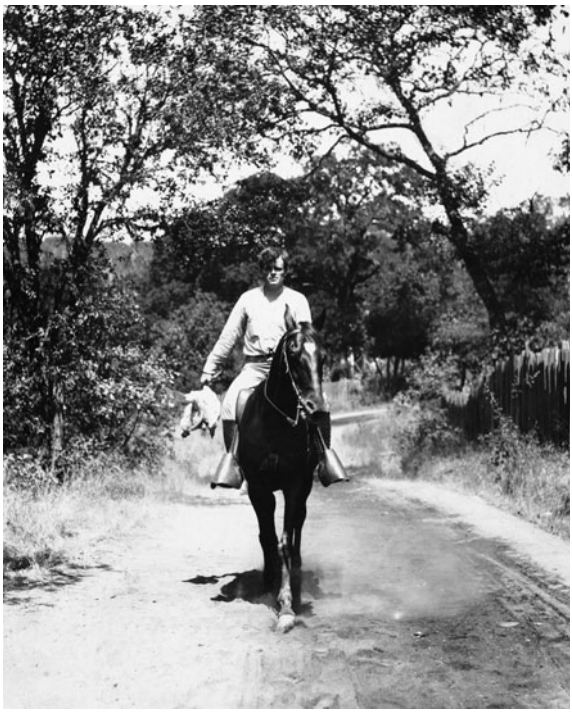


FIGURE 49.
On the Beauty Ranch London brings home a game bird on Washoe Ban, a favorite horse, ca. 1910.

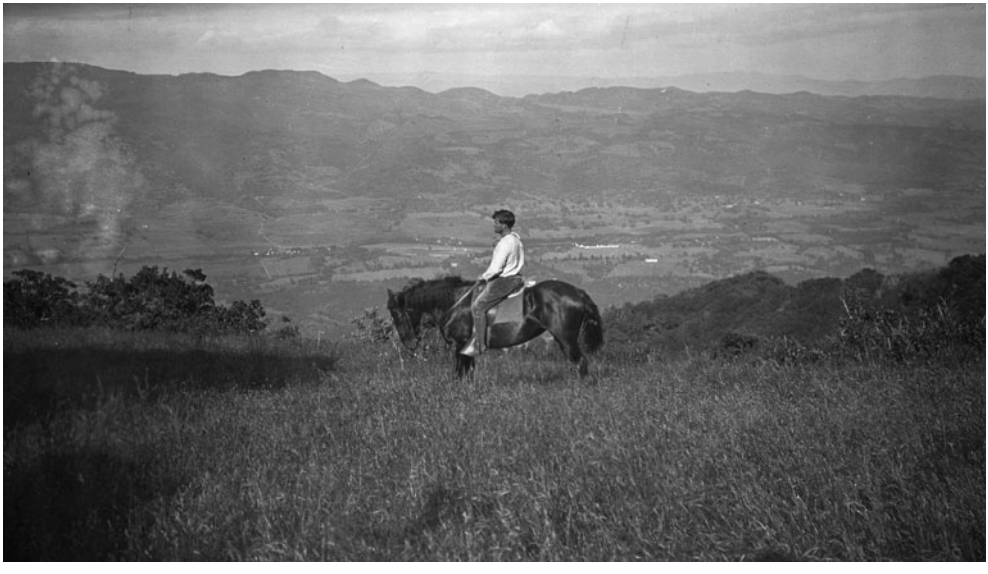


FIGURE 50. In this well-known photograph, London contemplates the Valley of the Moon near his California home. As he puts it in *John Barleycorn* (1913), "I ride out over my beautiful ranch. Between my legs is a beautiful horse. The air is wine. The grapes on a score of rolling hills are red with autumn flame. Across Sonoma Mountain wisps of sea fog are stealing. . . . I am possessed with the pomps of being, and know proud passions and inspirations."

FIGURE 51.
Portrait of a *Dirigo* crew member annotated by Charmian "Japanese sailmaker," 1912.
(Photograph by Jack London)

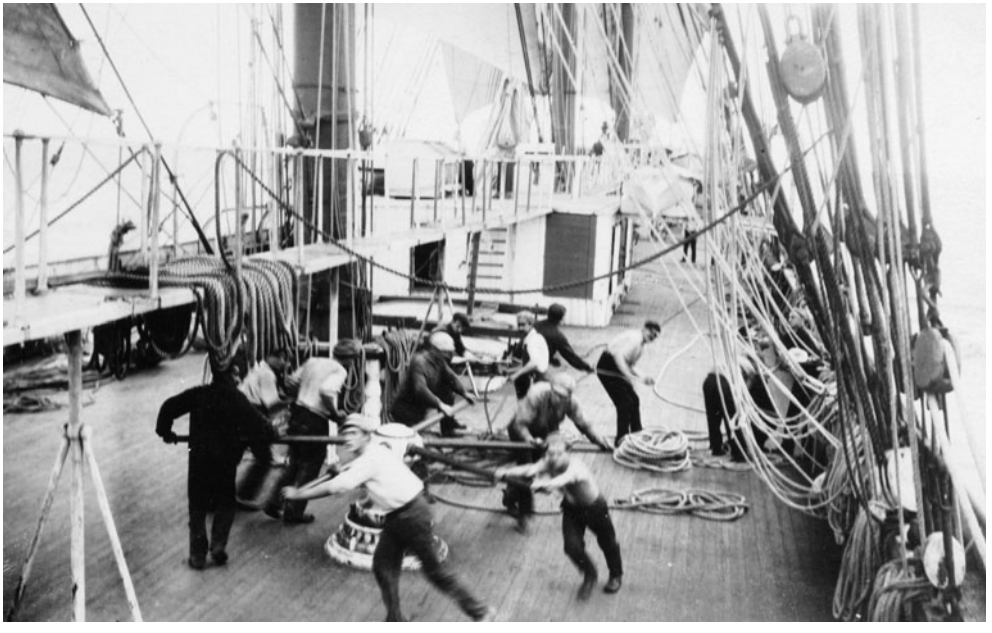


FIGURE 52.
Hauling the line on the capstan, *Dirigo*, 1912.

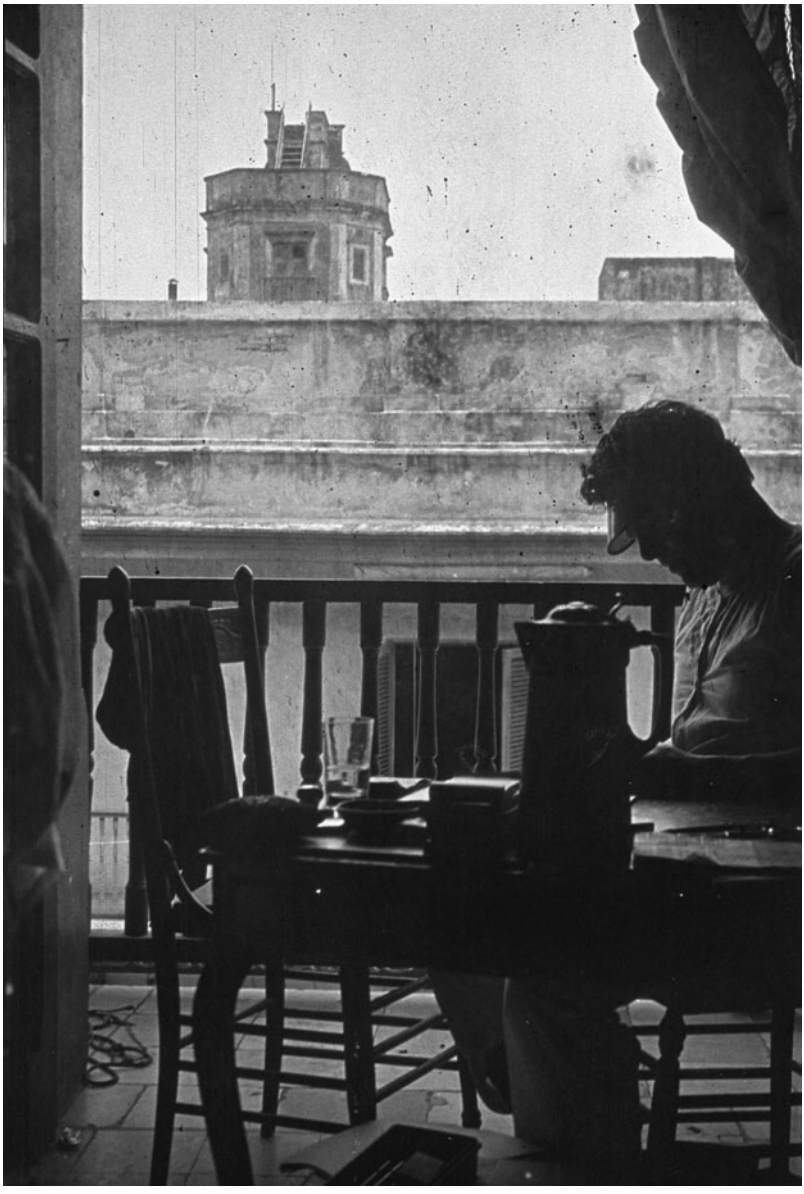


FIGURE 53.
London works on a balcony in Vera Cruz reporting
on the Mexican Revolution, 1914.

FIGURE 54.
Annotated by Charmian as "Brig. Genl F [Frederick] Funston on the SS *Kilpatrick*, Galveston, TX, April 28, 1914."
(Photograph by Jack London)

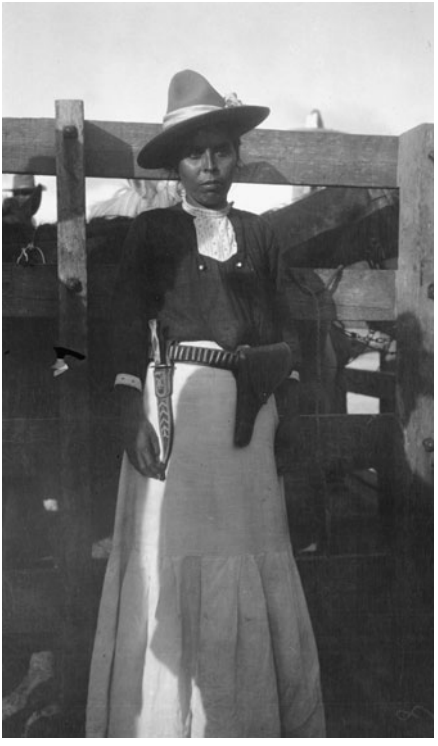


FIGURE 55.
Annotated "Soldadera" (Constitutionalist camp follower), Tampico, Mexico, 1914.
(Photograph by Jack London)

FIGURES 56–57.
Annotated by Charmian,
"Many of them did not know
for what they had been
doomed to the horrors of
San Juan de Ulua," 1914.
(Photographs by Jack London)

FIGURE 58.
Jack London and Charmian Kittredge London, annotated, "S. F. Aboard *Matsonia* From Honolulu on Aug 1, 1916."